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Aurelia refuses to Sacrifice to the Gods.

AURELIA

OR

THE JEWS OF CAPENA-GATE.

BY



BALTIMORE,

KELLY PIET & COMPANY

AURELIA;

OR,

THE JEWS OF CAPENA-GATE.

BY

M. A. QUINTON, Advocate,
Late Batonnier, and Member of the Academy of Sainte-Croix.

FREELY TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
By P. F. DE GOURNAY.

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1870.

rect description of those Roman customs in which questions of law held such an important place. You have made a most happy use of these discoveries, so far at least as I can judge from a cursory examination of your first volume, in an animated narrative replete with incidents and written with much spirit and talent.

I have, therefore, good reason to hope, dear sir and diocesan, that your work will meet with the most legitimate success. It will be a new honor to you and to our Academy of Ste Croix.

Let me once more tender you my best thanks and congratulations.

You will please accept, very dear sir and diocesan, my most devoted regards in Our Lord.

+FELIX, *Bishop of Orleans.*

PREFACE.

The praise received by Mr. Quinton's AURELIA from the French critics, and, especially, the commendation with which it was honored by such a high authority as the illustrious Bishop of Orleans, encourage the hope that a translation of this remarkable work will be favorably received by the American public.

The author's object has been to remove the veil which conceals those early times of the Christian Church, when Peter and Paul preached the Gospel in the capital of the pagan world destined to become the capital and eternal seat of the Church of the true God. Mr. Quinton, in seeking for the immediate consequences of that public profession of faith and the results that followed the death of the two apostles, did not consult the ecclesiastical writers who came long after those events had taken place, but sought his facts in the old heathen authors who were the contempories of the historical characters he had selected as the heroes of his drama. The facts connected with the extraordinary spread of Christianity in all classes of the Roman empire, the principal events of this narrative, and the life-like description of the customs of ancient Rome, are drawn from the writing of Tacitus, Suetonius, Dion Cassius, Seneca, Juvenal, Martial, and others.

Whilst pursuing the study of the contrast presented by the harsh Roman civilization and the softening influence of dawning Christianity, the learned French lawyer made the discovery of facts hitherto overlooked, which after being connected formed an unbroken chain of evidence. Uncertainty no longer exists, and after showing us the moral effect of Christianity upon Roman intitutions and Roman society, he proves important facts of peculiar interest. Thus we see the first Christian *hospital* founded by Flavia Domitilla, the niece of the Emperor Domitian, in her own house and not far

from the imperial palace; the same holy woman, having been exiled by her uncle, receives the veil from the hands of St. Clemens, the fourth successor of St. Peter, and proceeds to the island of Pontia, where she founds the first *monastery;* St. Clemens consecrates, in what has since been styled the *catacombs*, the first Christian burying ground, on the occasion of the death of the octogenarian Petronilla, the daughter of Peter, Prince of the Apostles!

Apart from the "historical treasures" discovered by the author, and for which he was warmly congratulated by Mgr. Dupanloup, AURELIA has all the merit of a highly dramatic narrative. Whilst, therefore, this work commends itself to the scholar, it is hoped that lovers of wholesome light literature will find it as entertaining as most of the works of fiction of the day.

BALTIMORE, October, 1869.

Although no note references are given in the book, the notes to AURELIA are of such historic interest and value, that the publishers have concluded to add them as an appendix to the work, for the benefit of those readers who seek something more than mere entertainment. The number of the page and a proper heading to recall the subject to mind have been given with each note.

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AURELIA;

OR,

THE JEWS OF CAPENA GATE.

Part First—The Informer.

CHAPTER I.

ROME IN THE YEAR OF GRACE NINETY-ONE.

IN the year 842 of its foundation, a period which corresponds with the year 91 of the Christian era—Rome already groaned under the implacable and sanguinary tyranny of the Emperor Domitian.

Doubtless, the Roman people, formerly so happy and so free, must have repented bitterly that it had given unto itself masters in the person of its Cæsars; for, to the peaceful and mild reign of Augustus, had succeeded, without interruption, those of the stern and taciturn Tiberius, of Caligula, the madman, of the imbecile Claudius, and of the infamous and cruel Nero; then those of Galba, Othonus and Vitellius. In other words, during fifty-five years, every possible humiliation and servitude had been inflicted upon the pride of the conquerors of the world; they had been made to suffer all sorts of misfortunes, of sanguinary excesses, of unparalleled disorders and fearful seditions; until terror and anguish had become the habitual, daily conditions of their life.

It is true that the accession to the Imperial throne, of

Vespasian and his eldest son, Titus, had been a truce to these public desolations; but this blissful interregnum of twelve years had flown with the rapidity of happy dreams; and clouds as threatening and gloomy as those which had overshadowed the worst days of suffering, were gathering on the horizon since Domitian succeeding his brother, so justly surnamed *the delight of mankind*, had ascended to the throne.

At the time our story commences, many public and private catastrophes, many sentences of banishment against the most illustrious individuals, many murders perpetrated openly or secretly, had marked the ten years already elapsed of Domitian's reign, and filled Rome with a terror which prostrated the most manly courage.

Nevertheless, in this year 842, Rome enjoyed, apparently at least, a moment of quiet and some little respite from its sufferings.

Not that the Emperor Domitian had modified his usual instinctive cruelty, or that he had endeavored to conciliate some sympathy by putting a stop to his series of crimes; but, since several months he had left Rome, to direct personally the war which his generals had waged without success against Decebalus, King of the Dacians. He intended also seizing this opportunity to take revenge on the Quadi and Marcomani, tribes of Germany, and neighbors of the Daci, who, during this long war, commenced in the year 837 (A. D. 86), had not shown themselves the faithful allies of the Emperor, nor observed the conditions of their old treaties with the Roman people.

However, if temporarily, the weight of Domitian's iron hand was not felt upon the immense city, the situation was neither better nor more encouraging. The danger was less actual and seemed less pressing; but it remained suspended over the heads of the people; and many, alarmed at what they saw around them, believed it still more fearful because not immediate.

The Emperor had left Rome filled with the ministers of his tyranny, and the habitual agents of his fury. A crowd of informers vied in skillfulness and audacity, to feed the equally insatiable hate and cupidity of the master of the world.

These shameful agents of imperial tyranny, full of that zeal which servile obsequiousness for the master awakens in vile natures, had divided the city between them, and prowled incessantly in the streets, hunting up the slightest indications, upon which they might build their sinister accusations, scrutinizing the most natural acts with the activity and intelligence of those indefatigable hounds which are set upon the traces of forest beasts.

No detail, however minute, could escape their anxious investigations; no suspicion, however faint and fleeting, was treated with indifference by them; the dwellings the most completely veiled in obscurity, became transparent and could conceal no secret from them. One might have thought that they penetrated into consciences and hearts, so well did their sagacity read the most hidden thoughts; but it was to suppress the least aspiration to liberty, and, in the forcible language of Tacitus, "to keep a record of every tear and every sigh."

CHAPTER II.

AN INFORMER AT WORK.

ON the eve of the Ides of the month of Julius, (14th of July) in this same year, 842, (A. D. 91), the sun-dials in the Forum indicated the sixth hour of the day, (noon), when a man, coming out of the basilica Julia, tarried a while under its peristyle already filled with a compact and tumultuous crowd.

The tribunal of the Recuperators was assembled by extraordinary, in this place where the Centumviri usually held their sittings, and what caused this great affluence of people, was that a very important suit, bearing on a State-question, had just been decided, after several sessions, during which the two most celebrated lawyers of the time had participated in the passionate debates.

The citizen, whose appearance under the peristyle, we have

mentioned, was a man of about fifty years. His radiant features, the triumphant looks he cast upon the crowd, which however seemed to avoid him with mingled terror and contempt, and from which threatening voices had saluted him with curses, would have sufficiently indicated that he was interested in the contestation, even though his dress had not revealed the active part he had taken in it.

He was clad in the toga of mourning usually worn by orators desirous of feigning distress and of inspiring compassion; and, by an extraordinary singularity, had completed this carefully studied, theatrical exhibition of desolation, by covering half of his face with a wide bandage.

Every minor detail had been made to harmonize, and the enormous bundle of papyrus leaves—probably documents connected with the suit just decided—which this gloomy personage held under his arm, were tied with strings as black as his toga.

He took off the bandage which, out of the court, had no longer any meaning, and concealed it in the folds of his wide garment. The hostile demonstrations of the people began to cause him some uneasiness, and he was already attempting to wend his way through the dense crowd, when deep groans, mingled with fearful imprecations, resounded near him.

These groans proceeded from the lips of an old man, whose appearance and demeanor denoted the wildest despair. This unfortunate being, like the man with the bandage and black toga, was leaving the interior of the basilica; but he came out rending his wretched garments, tearing his ash-covered white locks, and striking his breast. It was evident that the decision of the tribunal had struck at his dearest interests.

He was accompanied by his defender, a younger man, whose noble and grave features wore an expression of sadness. The lawyer sustained the tottering steps of his unhappy client, and endeavored to soothe him with the most affectionate solicitude; but his efforts were unavailing to soften this wild grief; the old man anon broke out in noisy lamentations, calling upon the bystanders to bear witness to the injustice of men and the rigor of the gods.

The theatrical orator, first mentioned, would have been glad to make his way out, and avoid meeting this old man

whose sight seemed to disturb him considerably; but the crowd was too compact. Baffled in his attempt, he made up his mind, resolutely, to approach those he wished so much to flee, and this he did, composing his features, with remarkable facility, so as to give them the cheerful and kindly expression suitable to the occasion.

"My dear Pliny," he exclaimed, grasping the hand of the old man's protector; "allow me to congratulate you, notwithstanding your defeat! Your pleading, yesterday, was the finest I have ever heard! By Apollo! you have surpassed Cicero, your model! But it is not surprising that you have lost your case; I had consulted the auspices, and had advised you that they were favorable to my cause."

Then, as Pliny-the-Younger—for it was he who had defended and lost the case—withdrew promptly his hand and turned away, vouchsafing him no other answer than a look of contempt, the brazen-faced individual turned to the old man:

"Unfortunate Cecilius," said he, affecting the liveliest compassion, "why did you not accept the compromise I proposed? You would"

He could not finish the sentence.

An iron grip was upon his throat and clutched it with a vigor one would have little suspected in an arm weakened by age and a body crushed by sorrow.

It was the hand of the old man, who, straightening up at the first words spoken by his adversary, had sprung at him like a tiger, and was shaking him with convulsive violence.

In an instant, he of the dark toga, breathless, almost choked to death, lost his balance and rolled down the marble steps, until his career was checked by the pedestal of one of the statues of the twelve great-gods that decorated the peristyle of the basilica Julia.

The admiring spectators clapped their hands, and gave expression to their delight by hooting, and overwhelming the discomfited orator with their gibes and mockeries.

Pliny-the-Younger, who had not had time to prevent this act of vengeance, seized Cecilius by the arm and hurried him away. They were soon out of sight.

Meanwhile, the citizen who had been made to descend so unceremoniously the broad steps of the basilica Julia, had jumped to his feet with a nimbleness that showed his limbs to

be unbroken. But if his body was unhurt, his features were distorted by indignation and anger.

"By all the gods of hades and by all the furies, I shall take my revenge, cursed old man!" he cried as soon as he was on his feet; and after a few minutes' reflection, he was seen to hurry towards a building contiguous to the temple of Saturn, which, like the basilica Julia, was situated within the limits of the Forum.

This structure was known as the *Tabularium* of the people. It was the place of deposit for public acts and records.

Having reached the office, the unknown called for the certificate of birth of a young girl named Cecilia; and, addressing the agent who had hastened to show him the document:

"You will state at the bottom of the act," said he, "that by a judgment of the tribunal of Recuperators, rendered this day, Cecilia, born of the lawful wedlock of Cecilius Bassa, a Roman citizen, and Tarsilla Pacuvia, deceased, is declared to be the property of Parmenon, a duly authorized slave-trader, she having been mancipated to the said Parmenon, by her father Cecilius. Here is a copy of the judgment."

And he placed in the hands of the agent a certified document with which he had taken care to provide himself before leaving the Court room.

The certificate having been duly entered and verified by this strange individual, he remembered probably that he had something else to do in the temple of Saturn, for, instead of retracing his steps, he entered a secret passage which led him to another and much larger office, where a prodigious activity reigned.

He was in the vast counting-room of the State and Imperial treasury.

We will not remain to examine the countenances of the citizens hurrying to pay their taxes, but will follow our unknown who, notwithstanding the avaricious glance cast on the piles of gold which the *libripendes* weighed and counted incessantly, tarried not, but singling out a citizen in the busy crowd, called him aside to ask him this question:

"Well! my dear Palfurius, what is the amount of the legacies made to our gracious master, the Emperor Domitian, since his departure from Rome? Have you prepared this

calculation which I must send to the prince by the next courier?"

"Certainly, and the total is important enough. In the last six months the wills in favor of the Emperor have produced fifteen millions of sestertii."

"What! are you not ashamed, Palfurius, to speak of such a paltry sum! Well may the divine Domitian congratulate you on your zeal!"

"But," exclaimed Palfurius, "there has been little mortality in Rome, of late, and consequently but a small number of wills have been read. Armilatus, with whom I was conversing recently on this subject, thinks that the mildness of the weather is the principal cause of this healthy condition; but the hot spell is commencing; it will bring diseases which will enable us to show our devotion to the prince."

"You and Armilatus are a pair of fools," cried the unknown, who seemed to care little how Palfurius, evidently a man of rank, would like the epithet; "I repeat that this amount is insignificant, and it is singular that you should find an excuse in the condition of the weather and the scarcity of disease. Reflect that the friends of the Emperor Augustus bequeathed to him a milliard of sestertii; that the sestertius was then worth much more than it is now, and that, consequently, you will never attain the fourth part of that sum, if you consider fifteen paltry millions of sestertii an important result for six months! Are you, perchance, one of those who think that Domitian should not be as well treated by his friends as was Augustus?"

This last remark, made in a significant tone, was so embarrassing, that Palfurius looked down, and could not find an answer.

"But," resumed the pitiless questioner, "since you have mentioned the name of Armilatus, may I know, at least, whether you have obtained the information which you two were to procure me concerning Flavius Clemens and his wife Flavia Domitilla? Have you ascertained, at last, whether, as reported, they have embraced the new superstition? Flavius Clemens is immensely wealthy, and if it should be true that he has become a Jew, there might be an easy way of making up, in part at least, the deficit of which we were speaking."

This question seemed to trouble Palfurius even more than the previous one; he replied, however:

"Flavius Clemens is the Emperor's cousin and Flavia Domitilla is his niece. Their two sons have received from our august master the names of Vespasianus and Domitianus, because he destines them for the empire. How do you want us to pry into the affairs of persons so near connected with the prince and to whom he has shown such favor. Look you, this is a dangerous matter, and you have not reflected sufficiently."

"So," said the unknown, giving a peculiar emphasis to each sentence, "you and Armilatus refuse to undertake it? It does not suit you—consular men as you are, able to penetrate into the intimacy of another consular, and chosen for that reason—it does not suit you to investigate a matter which gives uneasiness to the Emperor, and of which he wishes to be informed? Very well! We shall find other means. But really, dear Palfurius, you are the mere shadow of your former self!"

With this ironical and threatening remark, the unknown suddenly left Palfurius Sura, to the latter's great relief.

Crossing hurriedly the crowded halls of the temple of Saturn, he entered the Forum. It was deserted, for the heat had become unbearable, and the citizens had returned to their homes to enjoy the customary siesta.

But our man minded not the burning rays of the sun. He was absorbed in his thoughts of hate and revenge. Crossing the immense Forum in all its length, he followed the way to the Forum of Mars as far as the Ratumena gate; then, turning to the left, he entered a broad street, which led him to the Flaminius circus.

To the right is one of the oldest edifices in Rome, the *Villa publica*, where the Romans lodged the Ambassadors of countries with whom they had no alliance. They were not permitted to enter the city proper, (*urbs.*) The representatives of allied nations were introduced into the *holy* city and magnificently entertained in the *Græcostasis*, a splendid house situated in the centre of the Forum.

Near the *Villa publica*, the slave-traders occupied shops or taverns built between the massive pillars of the porticos. The unknown knocked repeatedly at the closed doors of one

of these taverns. It was at length opened by an individual of high stature, clad in a many-colored toga.

This man, whose brutish and insolent countenance bespoke a ruffian of the first order, was strangely disfigured. The horrible scars with which his face was covered, were evidently produced by the application of powerful acids or of the juice of venomous plants, so skillfully prepared by the witches of that time.

As he opened the door, this repulsive being rubbed his eyes, and yawned so as to distend immoderately his jaws. He had been disturbed from his *siesta*, and seemed in very bad humor thereat. But his anger vanished as if by magic when he recognized his untimely visitor.

"Parmenon, Cecilia is ours!" said the latter; but, on his lips, this word, *ours*, seemed to mean, *mine;* one could have easily seen that a master was speaking, and that Parmenon was a subaltern. "Yes, thanks to my eloquence, the mancipation in thy favor has been declared valid by the Recuperators, and thou canst put the ticket of sale on Cecilia; but thou must explain that she is of free condition, else a guarantee will be required."

"Master, I shall put the ticket."

"Very well! But it is necessary, absolutely necessary, that Cecilia should be sold to-morrow. Besides, thou wilt stipulate formally that she can never be affranchized or emancipated. I have important reasons to make this a rigorous clause. Ah! I was forgetting . . . the price must be one hundred thousand sestertii, not a *stips* less. Remember our agreement; I must have two-thirds. If ever thou shouldst think of invoking the absurd Cincia law, thou knowest, wretch, that I can"

"Master, fear nothing; what has been agreed shall be faithfully fulfilled;" hastened to answer Parmenon, in whom the last words of the unknown had awakened unpleasant reminiscences.

Satisfied with this promise, and having no further recommendation to make to Parmenon concerning Cecilia, our individual, who had not completed his self-imposed task, hastened to leave the *Villa publica*, and returned in the direction of the Ratumena gate.

Following his steps, we again cross the Forum; we then

leave it on our right to enter the *Clivus* of Victory, and we are in the Palatine, in its south-east angle, and in front of a celebrated house. Built by M. Livius Drusus, the people's Tribune, it had passed into the hands of P. Crassus, and afterwards into those of Cicero, who borrowed three millions sestertii to pay Crassus the purchase money.

This M. Livius Drusus made to his architect, who proposed to construct the house so as to protect the owner from prying eyes, this answer, which has been preserved by history: "I wish my house could be made of glass, in order that everybody should see what is going on within."

The mysterious individual we have followed so far, looked carefully around to make sure that he was not observed; and, having ascertained that the street was silent and deserted, crossed rapidly the small circular place in front of the house, knocked softly at the door, and addressing the slave-porter who answered his knock:

"Greeting," said he, "to Palæstrion, the future freedman of the divine Aurelia!"

"Alas, my lord," replied the slave, bowing with deference, "may Jupiter hear you! Many times, already, you have given me such words of hope, but I do not perceive that my chain is loosened or its links broken!"

And the poor fellow pointed to his legs, which were tightly imprisoned in a double circle of iron connected with a long chain, the end of which was firmly secured to the wall.

"You do wrong, Palæstrion," resumed the unknown, "to doubt my words; every time you have seen me, I have broken one of those links, for I have given you gold, that is, the means of purchasing your freedom. And to-day again, I have taken care not to forget the interest I feel in the unhappy Palæstrion. Here are two *aurei* for you."

And he handed to the slave two gold pieces, which the latter hid away with marvellous dexterity, in the folds of his garment.

"But, my lord," remarked the slave, "you must have a motive to show such deep interest to a poor wretch like me! I confess that I am very uneasy, for, since the last time you were here, something has happened in this house which has given me much to reflect upon!"

"Ah! what is it, Palæstrion? What has happened?"

"I must tell you, my lord, that our mistress, the divine Aurelia, is not cruel towards her slaves. She seldom causes them to be whipped. She was very fond of a girl named Doris Did you know her, my lord!" asked Palæstrion, interrupting his narrative, for he had seen the unknown start at the mention of that name.

"Why should you suppose I have known her?" replied the latter, whose features assumed an expression of indifference. "Continue."

"Well, my lord, this Doris who was the habitual *ornatrix* (hair-dresser) of the divine Aurelia, by order of our mistress, she was stripped of all her clothes, suspended by her hair in the centre of the *atrium*, and there, in presence of the whole *family*,* was so cruelly whipped by the public executioner, that she expired under our eyes in the most horrible convulsions."

"And why this unusual severity?" asked the unknown with well-feigned impassibility.

"Oh! the divine Aurelia is quite grieved at the death of her hair-dresser; she says she cannot replace her easily. It is even stated that she weeps frequently; but we have been told again this morning, that she would consign to the same fate any member of the family who, like Doris, should betray the secrets of her house to Marcus Regulus Why! my lord, what is the matter with you?"

It required a mighty effort on the part of the unknown to conceal the emotion caused by this name. He succeeded, however, and replied with composure:

"Nothing, Palæstrion; the fate of this young Doris fills my heart with compassion, and I could not suppress a groan. But this Marcus Regulus must be very dangerous that such an order should be given?"

"They say, my lord, that he is the vilest wretch there is in Rome, and I have thought, . . . that Doris' fate awaits me, . . . if . . . unfortunately . . . he who questions me . . . and whom I do not know . . . should be . . ."

"Thanks, Palæstrion, for the comparison and your good

*Name by which the slaves in a household were designated.

opinion of me! But, thanks to the gods, my questions cannot compromise you and make you fear this fate . . ."

"It is true, my lord . . . and you will pardon a poor slave who trembles, but who meant no offence, . . . for you are not Marcus Regulus . . . Besides, I shall see whether I can reply to your questions.

"They will be very simple ones, and dictated by my devotion to the noble house of your august mistress. Is our Grand-Vestal, the illustrious Cornelia, any better? Will she soon be able to resume her high and holy duties?"

"No, my lord, the health of the Grand-Vestal is not good. The divine Aurelia's tender care cannot succeed in making her forget the punishment inflicted by the Pontiff Helvetius Agrippa; and it is the deeply felt and ever recurring shame of that punishment, which, it is said, prevents her recovery."

"And your mistress, the divine Aurelia, is she occasionally visited by Metellus Celer?"

Palæstrion seemed to think this question dangerous or indiscreet, for he made no reply to it. His face even showed a shadow of suspicion, which vanished, however, when the unknown resumed unconcernedly—

"After all, what interest have I in Metellus Celer's doings more than in any one else's! But, tell me one thing that I do care about: do not Flavius Clemens and the two Flavia Domitillas come here any more? I heard that your mistress had ceased seeing them. As for me, I do not believe a word of it; they are so closely related!"

"Oh! there are reasons."

"They must be grave ones, then?"

"People say that Flavius Clemens and the two Flavias are —how shall I say? Ah! yes, that they are with the Jews of the Capena gate."

"That is to say, Christians!"

"Yes, Christians, that's it! And they would have liked that my mistress, the divine Aurelia, should become a Christian also, but she refused. And she even told them that she would not see them any more, for they still insisted."

The burden of a Spanish song, popularized in Rome by the poet Martial, resounded in the atrium, hummed by a pure young voice.

The unknown started at the sound of this voice, and hurried away from the door, saying to Palæstrion:

"Some one comes; I must be off. I shall see you again."

But he could not disappear quickly enough not to be seen by the singer, a young man, who came out of Aurelia's house. The unknown turned round to cast a hasty glance on the person who had interrupted his conversation with Palæstrion.

"By Hercules!" exclaimed the young man, as he caught sight of the retreating figure, "I believe it is that infamous Regulus! What brings him in this neighborhood? Hallo! Palæstrion," he asked, turning to the porter, who trembled with fear, "is it possible that you hold communication with Regulus?"

"No, my lord," stammered the affrighted wretch, "I have no acquaintance with this Regulus, and I know too well that our divine mistress . . ."

"Rascal! if I were sure, I would flay you alive! But it is important that Cornelia and Aurelia should be informed of the presence of this man near their residence."

And the young man re-entered Aurelia's house.

Meanwhile, Marcus Regulus, for it was he who had fled on the approach of the young man, muttered to himself with exultant satisfaction, as he ran:

"I was sure of it! I had recognized his voice! It is Metellus Celer; he was there whilst I conversed with Palæstrion. Ah! Metellus, you visit the Grand Vestal at nooning time! Very well! Helvius Agrippa shall know this important fact, and another person also—the Great Pontiff Domitianus. We have got you now, illustrious Cornelia!"

An hour later, Marcus Regulus was seated in his splendid mansion beyond the Tiber, thinking of the employment of his time; he could exclaim, like Titus: "I have not lost my day!" Only, it was with evil doings instead of good deeds that he marked his days.

Poor Palæstrion was not whipped to death like Doris, for there was no proof of his conversation with the spy; but in his terror at the danger to which he had been exposed, and his indignation at the deception practised upon his ignorance, the slave muttered between his teeth:

"Ah! Marcus Regulus, it was you? The villain! 'I shall see you again,' he said. Well, let him come! I'll set my dogs upon him!"

CHAPTER III.

WARD AND GUARDIAN.

THE burning rays of a July sun filled with light the dark and narrow streets of ancient Rome. The divine Aurelia who, surrounded by her maids, sat pensive in her *cubiculum*, (bed room,) cast a languid glance on the bright sky, and addressing the attentive slaves who awaited her commands:

"I want to go this afternoon," said she in an imperious tone, "to Pompey's portico. Let my guardian, Vibius Crispus, be notified immediately, and let every thing be in readiness at the eighth hour of the day (four o'clock, P. M.)"

It was no little matter, this going out of a matron of Aurelia's rank. When she left her house where she usually led the silent and retired life of the gynecium, to appear in public, it must be with an escort proportionate to her high condition.

No sooner then was the order of the noble patrician transmitted, than her five hundred slaves were in commotion, and Cicero's ancient house was made noisy with their preparations for so great an event.

But it is time we should say something of this Aurelia, whom Marcus Regulus never failed to designate as the *divine Aurelia*, a title that may appear perhaps too honorific for a simple mortal.

We shall take the same occasion to explain why the Grand-Vestal—the illustrious Cornelia, as Regulus styled her—happened to be in Aurelia's house instead of inhabiting the *atrium regium*, the sacred asylum of the Virgins of Vesta.

Aurelia Flavia-Domitilla—for she bore these surnames in common with all the female members of the Flavia race, was the grand-niece of the emperor Vespasian. Her father was Flavius Sabinus, son of Sabinus *Major*, Vespasian's elder brother; and her mother, Julia, the daughter of Titus, so much beloved by the Romans.

She was, therefore, the grand-niece of Domitian, and also the niece of Flavius Clemens, her father's brother. We must also mention—for all these names belong to our narrative—that her cousin, Flavia Domitilla, had become her aunt,

having married Flavius Clemens, whose supposed conversion to the religion of Christ gave Regulus so much anxiety. Another cousin, bearing also the name of Flavia Domitilla, was likewise suspected of being a Jewess or Christian.

Our charming young heroine was, therefore, doubly connected with the imperial family; and during the reign of Domitian, who claimed from all who addressed him the title of MASTER and GOD, (*Dominus et Deus noster,*) no one would have dared speak of a relative of the emperor, without using a title that admitted her participation in this much feared divinity.

Moreover, Domitian, whose only child had died in its infancy, had recently, by a public act, designated for his successors to the empire, the two sons of Flavius Clemens, whose names he had changed into those of Vespasianus and Domitianus. The education of these two young men had been confided to the celebrated Quintilian.

The eldest, Vespasian, was to marry his young cousin, Aurelia, who would thus share with him, after Domitian's death, the throne of the universe. The divine Aurelia was, therefore, the greatest lady of Rome, although, at the time our narrative commences, she had barely attained her fifteenth year. Her wealth was immense. Besides her house in Rome, and the five hundred slaves which filled it, besides several magnificent villas situated in the finest sections of Italy, the divine Aurelia possessed, in ready money, the enormous sum of two billions seven hundred millions sestertii, and her jewels were valued at forty millions sestertii.

But Aurelia was an orphan.

The years of childhood flow sadly when they are not embellished by a father's care or the love of a mother. This had been the young Aurelia's bitter experience.

However, her youthful sorrow had been soothed by the tender affection of a young girl near whom she passed her early years in the sanctuary of Vesta. This young girl, connected with the most illustrious family of Rome, the family of the Scipios, the Syllas, the Cinnas, etc., was the Vestal Cornelia, with whose touching and mournful history we shall acquaint the reader.

The vestals, six in number, were chosen from among young girls between six and ten years of age, and remained

during thirty years attached to the temple. During the first ten years they studied the rites and ceremonies; during the second period of ten years, they practiced, and during the third they taught.

The vestal who, survived the trials of this long service, and became the most ancient, was styled the Grand-Vestal or *Vestalia-Maxima;* she was distinguished from her five companions by greater honors and higher prerogatives. But, her responsibility increased with her elevation, and she had often to bear alone the cruel punishments awarded for faults committed by other vestals.

Such was the case with Cornelia; she had attained the supreme rank of Grand-Vestal, but had soon become apprized of its perils.

She had suffered the chastisement of slaves!

The Sacred Fire having been extinguished through the neglect of one of the priestesses, Helvius Agrippa, Domitian's substitute in the pontificate, had made her responsible of this fault which was considered a most unhappy omen, and the proud patrician girl was subjected, like the vilest of slaves, to the tortures of flagellation.

Shame, even more than physical pain, had made her seriously ill; and being authorized, according to custom, to withdraw to a private house during her sickness, she had left momentarily the *Atrium Regium*, for the roof of her dear Aurelia who, at the age of twelve years, as fixed by the Roman law, had had to leave the temple of Vesta.

This necessary digression being ended, we shall now resume the thread of our story.

The curtain of Aurelia's apartment was drawn aside, and an old man of small stature, with a smiling and pleasant countenance, entered, bowing to the young girl with every demonstration of respect. He wore the *laticlave*, indicating the rank of senator. It was Vibius Crispus, Aurelia's guardian, whom she had sent for.

It was he who incurred the displeasure of Domitian by an impudent joke preserved by history. The emperor had a curious habit of transfixing flies with the point of his style. On one occasion, somebody having asked Vibius if the emperor was alone:

"Certainly," replied the waggish old man, "there is not even a fly with him."

Domitian was furious when he heard of this, but the astute old courtier managed so well that he outlived his master's anger, and even retained his favor, since he remained the divine Aurelia's guardian.

"My august ward has sent for her old guardian," he remarked, saluting her with mingled familiarity and respect. "Can I have the happiness of doing anything for her?"

"Yes, my dear guardian, I wish you to accompany me to Pompey's portico."

"But," exclaimed Vibius, who had had time to notice the sad expression of the young girl's face, "there is something else, for, by Jupiter, I believe you are weeping! Come, my dear ward, what is the matter with you? Speak, I beseech you! Your unworthy guardian may, perhaps, bring back a smile on that charming face."

"Oh! my dear Vibius, I am indeed very unhappy! The state of my poor Cornelia saddens me; and then"

"Then?"

"I am very guilty . . . Read this letter."

And she handed to Vibius a sheet of papyrus such as was manufactured in Rome since Claudius' time, and which was as white as our best vellum.

The letter was from Flavia Domitilla (not the Flavia wife of Clemens) and written on that very morning to her young cousin, Aurelia. It ran thus:

"Flavia Domitilla to Aurelia-Flavia-Domitilla,

"*Greeting:*

"Dear Cousin.—We have just now learned that you have caused your hair-dresser, Doris, to be put to death. Undoubtedly, the laws of Rome gave you this right; but you must be aware that few citizens avail themselves of it, unless, indeed, they are entirely pitiless; and it is sad that a young girl of your age should be put on the same level with those cruel men.

"Your uncle Clemens, and Flavia Domitilla, your aunt, think that it is very unfortunate that the betrothed of their son could be guilty of such an abuse of power.

"According to our religion, it is a crime to take the life of a fellow-being; and our slaves, although they owe us

obedience and respect, are our brothers, being the children of the same God.

"See, dear cousin, if such a religion is not greater and more beautiful than that which teaches the master to look upon those unfortunates as so many vile animals.

"We pray to God that He may pardon and enlighten you."

Vibius Crispus, having read this letter, was seized with a fit of laughter. This selfish and corrupt old man, one of the representatives of a decrepid and heartless society could find only a subject for mirth in those simple and dignified remarks.

However, as this irony might be construed as a want of respect for his august ward, he apologized and asked:

"Are these reproaches and singular counsels the cause of your sadness, divine Aurelia?"

"Yes, I must confess it, dear guardian, I have been deeply moved by this letter; the more so as I had already said to myself almost the same things!"

"So, you think that a master has not over his slaves the right you have exercised."

"No, Vibius. But the treatment was so cruel! . . . It is true that I had not given such orders, and it is a misfortune if my hair-dresser succumbed . . . But this misfortune, I am charged with it. What will my cousin Vespasian think of it?"

"Ah! my dear and divine ward," said Vibius smiling, and looking at the blushing young girl; "ah! you are afraid of appearing too harsh in the eyes of the dear betrothed, and of displeasing him! Very well! at least this is a motive. And this is why we wish to go Pompey's portico, where the young cousin walks every afternoon with his tutor."

"Vibius! Vibius! you are very wicked! Yes, I want to see my cousin, but it is to explain to him . . to excuse . ."

"And what need have you of excuses? I was present the other day at Faunia's toilet. Her waiting maids were around her, their shoulders bare down to the waist; and I can assure you the whip did not remain idle when any of them was guilty of carelessness. Do you think Faunia would mourn over the death of a hair-dresser!"

And as the young girl remained thoughtful and silent, Vibius continued:

"For having forgotten a towel, Ogulnia's bathing-attendant

was tortured with blades of brass brought to a red-heat. Medullina, that fair and gentle girl, moderates the unbearable chattering of her chamber-maids by sticking into their arms the long pins with which she fastens her hair. Has any body ever accused these matrons of being pitiless? As for me, I am of Pliny-the-Younger's opinion—and surely, no one will accuse him of cruelty towards his slaves; speaking of the tragical end of Sargius Macedo, beaten to death by his *family*, he remarked that masters should make themselves feared, else all would perish! Rome, my dear ward, contains two hundred thousand citizens and two millions of slaves; will your cousin Flavia-Domitilla tell me how they can be kept down, unless it is by the terror of punishment?"

Vibius-Crispus might have multiplied indefinitely his examples, without obtaining a word from Aurelia. It was easy to perceive that remorse had entered her young heart, already disposed to feelings of goodness and humanity, and that the pitiless arguments of Vibius worried her.

He understood this, and changed adroitly the conversation:

"I know somebody," he said, "who would pay a large price for the letter you have shown me."

"And who is it, if you please?" interrupted Aurelia.

"Marcus Regulus."

"Marcus Regulus! why so, guardian?"

"Because he would find in this letter a proof he has been seeking everywhere: that Flavius Clemens, his wife, and your cousin Flavia-Domitilla are Christians."

"And what would be the result?" Aurelia hastily inquired.

"The result? I don't know! But in the Emperor Nero's time, it happened more than once, that we strolled in his gardens, lighted by Christians whom they burnt in the guise of torches, with tunics prepared with sulphur and rosin. Perhaps the Emperor Domitian would like to enjoy one of these agreeable spectacles."

With one bound, the divine Aurelia, her beautiful face bathed in tears, was in her guardian's arms.

"Oh! my guardian, Oh! my dear Vibius," sobbed the young girl, "what good your words have done me! Doris was an infamous wretch! Her death was just, and I have nothing to reproach myself with!"

Vibius could not understand. He received his ward's

caresses like one who knows not what to do, or what to think.

"My dear ward," he said at last, "your affection honors and touches me. But tell me, how could my words bring this change? . . ."

"Oh! Vibius, Doris had written to Regulus. Her letter was intercepted . . . Cornelia and Metellus Celer were so indignant at this, that they ordered her punishment . . ."

"What were the contents of that letter?"

"First, Doris informed Regulus that Celer visits Cornelia almost every day."

"This is a grave matter for your friend, my dear ward; I begin to understand . . . And then?"

"Then, she positively accused my relatives, Flavius Clemens and the two Flavias Domitillas of being Christians, and related their attempts to convert me."

"It is very lucky, dear ward," said Vibius, interrupting Aurelia, "that Doris' letter should have been intercepted. You are right, she deserved death, for Regulus would have made a detestable use of that letter. But the Emperor is absent, I am informed of the facts and there is nothing to fear until he returns; we shall see, then, how to prevent the misfortunes that may threaten . . . Dry your tears, divine Aurelia, and let us start for Pompey's portico. Your Numidian horsemen are ready, and when I arrived they could scarcely restrain their impatient steeds. Let us go!" And Vibius clapped his hands as a signal to the escort.

The young girl's sadness had vanished, and her face had resumed its wonted serenity.

When she appeared in the atrium, her graceful features veiled in a diaphanous tissue of delicate fabric, and her flexible waist concealed by the folds of her *stole* and her wide *palla*, every one was ready.

Sixteen slaves surrounded the rich litter with purple cushions. They were Ethiopians of the deepest black, clad in snow-white tunics, and wore silver bracelets on their wrists and ankles. Near them stood the indispensable crowd of hand-maids, receiving the instructions of Aurelia's nurse.

These women were provided with the numerous elegant trifles, without which a fashionable lady, in those days, could not have hazarded herself in the streets. Parasols to protect the face; large fans of peacock feathers; balls of

crystal or yellow amber, which were rolled in the hands to prevent their sweating; tame snakes of a peculiar small specie, and of icy coldness, which were used—living necklaces,—to keep the throat cool, were among the inventions of fashion that our lady readers would have examined with the greatest curiosity and astonishment.

Fifty Numidian horsemen, clad in brilliant *lacernas* or military coats, were to precede and follow the litter, to keep the crowd off.

Aurelia having taken her place on the soft cushions, Vibius gave the signal, and eight Ethiopians lifted the magnificent litter.

The distance from the Palatine to Pompey's portico, was quite long, and the cortege was fully an hour going over it. Arrived at the entrance of the portico, Aurelia stepped out of her litter, and entered, followed by Vibius, her nurse and her female attendants.

CHAPTER IV.

A SLAVE MARKET.

THE Forum and the Campus Martius were not only the centres of the political life of the Romans, but the spots where the greatest magnificences of the capital of the world were accumulated. There were to be found its finest monuments and most sumptuous porticos; its wealthiest temples and most elegant walks; its most fashionable shops or taverns; all the enjoyments and seductions offered to the idle and purposeless existence of its most illustrious citizens.

Modern art never could imitate the wonderful splendor of some of the edifices contained in the Campus Martius. Among these marvels were the porticos or covered walks supported by pillars of magnificent architecture. Pompey's portico, a vast parallelogram of 570 Roman feet in length, on a width of 350 feet, was the largest and most pleasant of these walks, being connected with the *Hecatonstylon*.

It was the habitual resort of the aristocratic society of Rome,

which thronged daily the wide space between the three hundred pillars of red granite forming a double range of galleries around the interior courts shaded by plane-trees and embellished with statues and fountains. The interior of these galleries was ornamented with paintings from the great Greek masters; whilst on the exterior, marble seats secured to the walls, afforded the visitors facilities for rest and conversation.

When Aurelia entered Pompey's portico, the crowd gave way, with respect, and gazed upon her with curiosity mingled with interest and solicitude. Every one knew this young girl as the Emperor's nearest relation, and no one was ignorant of the high destinies which awaited her.

With a single glance, Aurelia had scanned the immense multitude, and had sought in vain the only person she wished to see.

"My cousin is not here," she exclaimed with vexation.

"It is true, august ward," replied Vibius; "I had forgotten that his tutor has recently lost his two sons in a few days."

"But I must see Vespasian," said Aurelia; "I wish to speak to him by all means, and you know that my uncle and aunt do not receive me any longer."

"You can write to him, my dear ward. Besides, I shall arrange an interview. But, for the present, you must seek some diversion, and think no more of things that grieve you. Do you not like the sight of this portico, of the elegant society which fills it? I will call your escort if you desire, and we shall go to the Appian way?"

"Oh! what fine vases and magnificent things!" exclaimed the young girl, interrupting Vibius, and stopping before a tavern in which a man, clad in a strange and fantastic tunic, stood by a table covered with objects of art.

"Will the niece of the Emperor Domitian, the divine Aurelia, permit me to offer her whatever may please her in this tavern?" said an individual who suddenly approached the young girl.

"Who are you?" asked Aurelia somewhat haughtily.

"I come from the countries of Aurora," replied the unknown," bowing respectfully; "with this man and these murrhine vases, which I intend offering the Emperor Domitian. He will, doubtless, be pleased that his niece should select . ."

"I accept, I accept!" cried the delighted young girl, extending her hands toward two amphoræ of admirable design.

"But," she added, "these vases must be worth a considerable sum, and I wish to pay for them. Will you appraise them, my dear Vibius?"

"A friend of mine," said Vibius, "recently bought a cup of myrrh for seventy talents! it was larger than these two vases put together, but I must say that it was not of such fine make, nor had it the three colors, so precious in the eyes of lovers of the fine arts, and which are perfect in these vases."

"Then, you will send this tavern-master one hundred and forty talents this very day, provided, my dear guardian, that you authorize this folly of your ward; but those vases are so beautiful!" And turning to the unknown:

"What is your name?"

"Apollonius of Thyana, madam."

"What! can you be this Apollonius, who has filled Rome with reports of his prodigies?"

"Yes, madam," replied the philosopher, bowing again with still more deference; "and I cannot admit that the Emperor's niece should pay me for the very unworthy present which I am but too happy to offer her."

"Very well," replied the proud young patrician girl, "but the Emperor's niece cannot be under obligations to Apollonius. The vases shall remain here, or they shall be paid for, in money or otherwise. What is it you wish?"

"An audience from the Emperor, on his return."

This favor was so great that an enormous price was paid for it. It could be looked upon as a liberal compensation for the richest present. Aurelia hesitated a little.

"You shall have your audience," she said at last; "however, it is my pleasure that in exchange for these two murrhine vases, you shall accept from me two Corinthian cups, which will be sent to your tavern to-day."

Apollonius bowed for the third time without making any reply. When he looked up, the divine Aurelia was already some steps off. Two of her hand-maids carried the murrhine vases.

When she reached the peristyle, Aurelia found her litter and her attendants.

"Let us return by the way of the *Villa publica*," said she to Vibius; "I wish to see if the onyx and myrrh vases which are sold there can compare with mine."

The *Villa publica* was an immense bazaar where Rome displayed all the treasures of her commercial wealth, and where, also, the shame of her pitiless civilization could be seen in all its nakedness.

Aurelia's wishes were orders for Vibius; he commanded the escort to take the way to the *Villa publica*.

When they reached Flaminius' circus, an unexpected sight attracted Aurelia's attention, and she ordered her escort to halt.

On a high platform erected in the centre of a tavern already known to us, stood a number of half naked wretches, men and women, boys and girls, all wearing a label or ticket tied to their neck, and a white woolen cap or a crown of foliage on their heads. It was a slave market.

Parmenon, whom we have seen in such intimate conversation with Marcus Regulus, paraded in front of the platform, addressing the crowd and praising his human merchandize. The wretch held a long whip, which he applied from time to time to the shoulders of the trembling slaves, who nevertheless bore the stinging cuts of the lash without even a groan of pain.

"Look at that! How docile they are!" cried Parmenon triumphantly. "A master can chastise them at his pleasure. No revolt, no fatiguing lamentations need be feared. Come, citizens, buy, buy! The *libripens* is not far, and eight thousand sestertii are no great sum."

But no purchasers came out of the compact crowd, although, from the black African to the fair young daughter of Gaul, there was there an assortment of colors, ages and sexes, to suit the most fastidious.

Parmenon was despairing of effecting a single sale, when Aurelia's escort loomed in the distance. He concluded that some wealthy citizen was approaching, and his face became radiant with hope.

"Bring out the slaves from the interior!" he exclaimed, addressing his assistant.

The custom with slave-traders, was to expose to the public gaze the least valuable slaves, whilst those of greater value,

whom the perfection of their form or the talents they possessed fitted for the higher duties of body-servants, were cared for in an interior apartment, and only brought out on great occasions.

At Parmenon's command, a new lot of slaves ascended the platform. A thrill of admiration went through the crowd. Here was a splendid collection.

One young girl, particularly, attracted the admiring gaze of all. Her graceful form was protected by a few strips of coarse cloth, and her beautiful hair fell loose over her shoulders, covering her to the waist.

Like her companions, she wore the ticket of sale, but with this difference: it set forth that she was of free condition, and could never be affranchised. Her misfortune was then to be eternal.

Nevertheless, her face, turned up towards heaven, expressed a divine feeling of resignation. Silent tears which did not belie her courage, rolled slowly over her delicate and blushing cheeks.

This young girl was Cecilia—the victim of Marcus Regulus.

When she appeared on the platform, three cries were heard:

First, a cry of despair from her father, almost convulsed with grief.

Secondly, a cry of rage, resembling a threat, proffered by a young man, Cecilia's betrothed, who struggled to reach the platform, but was held back by his friends.

The third cry was a sublime exclamation, a supreme invitation to fortitude and hope:

"Courage! Cecilia," said this voice, "courage! Think of God for whom thou sufferest persecution, think of Christ, His Son, who will be thy reward!"

She who spoke these strange words—heard for the first time in Rome and in a slave market—was an old woman, almost an octogenarian, who crouched at the foot of the platform. She had cried "courage," and yet she wept. The resignation of the soul cannot control the tortures of the heart.

Cecilia had heard the three cries, her eyes searched the crowd, and she found a smile for the three persons who watched over her.

She also remarked a man who, springing forward from his

place of concealment behind a pillar, whence he had observed with anxiety the proceedings we have described, hastened to speak to Parmenon. It was Marcus Regulus.

"Take care!" he said hurriedly to the slave trader; "they want to get Cecilia away from you! Here is the divine Aurelia, the niece of the Emperor, coming with her escort. You must induce her to stop and to buy the girl. A hundred thousand sestertii will not frighten her!"

Parmenon's eyes closed as if dazzled by the mere thought of so much gold. Then he drew himself up proudly and stepped forward. The wretch was intoxicated with avaricious joy and hope.

It was at this moment Aurelia bade her escort stop. She saw Cecilia, read the label, and said to Vibius:

"Guardian, I like the looks of this young girl. I wish to purchase her, ask that man what price he holds her at. She will replace Doris."

Parmenon had heard her words. With one bound he was near Vibius.

"From any other purchaser, I would want two hundred thousand sestertii, but to the divine Aurelia, the august niece of our master, the Emperor Domitian, I shall sell this slave for one hundred thousand sestertii. My lord, do you authorize the purchase?"

Vibius was the model of guardians: he looked at his ward, and interpreting rightly her winning smile, as a prayer, the worthy senator yielded without objection and called for the *libripens*.

A man carrying a pair of scales, approached immediately. This was the *libripens*, the indispensable accessory to all sales and mancipations.

Aurelia stepped out of her litter, and Cecilia was ordered to come down from the platform.

The haughty mistress and her future slave exchanged one look; that of the noble lady was full of pride, that of the humble girl full of humble submissiveness.

Aurelia held in her hand a brass coin, symbol of the mancipation. With a firm step she advanced towards Cecilia; and covering the girl's head with her hand, pronounced the consecrated formula: "I say this young girl is mine by the law of the Quirites, and that I have bought her with this money and these scales."

At the same time, she touched the scales of the *libripens* with her coin, which she then handed to Parmenon as the fictitious price of Cecilia's mancipation.

The fellow who did not appreciate fictions, even when they were a legal form, asked the senator when he could get the real amount.

"Immediately," said Vibius; "send to my ward's steward."

But, as the young patrician, taking possession of her new slave was about re-entering in her litter, a strange scene occurred.

Another cortege, coming from the Ratumena gate and going to the temple of Juno-Regina, near Flaminius' Circus, had surrounded Aurelia's escort during the formalities of the mancipation.

The noisy instruments which preceded it had stopped suddenly upon recognizing the Emperor's niece.

A young girl descended from a chariot drawn by two heifers with gilt horns. She wore the mysterious dress of the priestesses of Isis; a band of Corybantes and priests of Cybele, wearing the Phrygian tiara on their heads, accompanied her, making strange gestures and shouting so loud as to drown at times the noisy music.

The priestess of Isis was radiant with beauty; her eyes, more brilliant than the golden stars which encircled her head, were resplendent with the fire of inspiration.

It was Ganna, the prophetess, who, like Velleda, had come from Gaul to prophecy the future. She had been received with great honors at Rome, where she already replaced the divinities in whom the people no longer believed.

"Daughter of Titus," she cried, when Aurelia's hand touched Cecilia's head; "do not take that slave to your home, she will bring you death!"

But the octogenarian whom we have seen encouraging Cecilia rose at these words; her eyes also shining with sublime enthusiasm.

"Daughter of the Cæsars," said she in solemn accents, addressing the divine Aurelia, "take this young girl home, she will give you life!"

The aged woman who spoke thus, was Petronilla, the daughter of Peter, chief of the apostles.

The crowd contemplated with silent surprise, these two women, so different in every respect, Petronilla and Ganna, both speaking to the niece of the Emperor, in the same authoritative tone.

One foretelling death; the other promising life.

Both spoke the truth!

One, notwithstanding her youth, represented the past; the other, notwithstanding her old age, represented the future.

Double and living image of Rome! of the old Rome dying with her brow crowned with flowers; of the young Rome entering life amid suffering and desolation!

Aurelia, the careless child, saw in all this only the charming slave she had purchased and she wished to keep.

Vibius Crispus, the skeptic old man, shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Let us go!" said he to his ward.

The cortege moved, and soon, with Cecilia, Christianity was entering Cicero's ancient dwelling.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST LIGHTS.

IT was a day forever memorable in the history of nations, that on which St. Paul, at Cæsarea, a captive and accused by the Jews, delivered before Porcius Festus, the governor of Judea, and King Agrippa, that magnificent discourse preserved in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and which he ended with this supreme invocation:

"I appeal to Cæsar!"

Paul appealing to Cæsar, must be sent to Rome. King Agrippa convinced of the sublimity of Paul's doctrine, and feeling himself almost a Christian, would have liked to set him free, for he did not believe he deserved the death penalty claimed by his accusers, nor the imprisonment in which he had already been kept two years; but it was impossible to neglect this appeal to Cæsar. Porcius Festus had replied: "Thou appealest to Cæsar, thou shalt go to Cæsar!"

This Cæsar was the Emperor Nero. Could Paul hope to make him tremble with the same words which had moved the hearts of his judges, Felix, Porcius Festus, and King Agrippa?

Did the Apostle intend speaking to Nero of justice, of chastity and of the judgment to come?

And Rome? how would she listen to Paul announcing penitence, preaching conversion to an only God, and works of mercy worthy of that penitence?

Truly, Paul must have lost his senses, and Festus had justly exclaimed:

"Thou art mad, Paul! Thy science has disturbed thy understanding!"

Albeit, Paul shall go to Rome.

Peter has already been there sometime; he has founded there the seat of the Church of Jesus Christ; it is important that Paul should join him.

Who knows? Jesus Christ has already some rights in the capital of the world: the Cæsars have authorized him to be a God, and Tiberius has caused his bust to be placed in the senate—until His Faith shall reign in Rome!

Paul's arrival was announced, and the faithful went to meet him at Appius' Forum. He stopped at a modest inn, and the Roman police authorized him to remain there, and placed a soldier at his door to watch over him. He was free, however, to go about the city, and to see whom he pleased.

There were two classes of Jews in Rome at that time. Some, wealthy and powerful, had taken their residence there as they have done since in all the great centres of population. The others, poor and obscure, faithful and chosen flock, had followed St. Peter, and congregated around him, leading a life of prayer and labor, unknown to all except to the unfortunates whom they assisted as brothers, the fiscal agents who ground them by their exactions, and the philosophers who commenced to look upon their doctrines with uneasiness.

Not far from the Capena gate, to the left as one came out by the Appian way, was a small woods, consecrated to Libitina, the goddess of funerals.

Formerly, on this same spot, there had stood a temple dedicated to the nymph Egeria, and some sanctuaries inhab-

ited—tradition said—by the Muses. Nothing remained of these structures but ruins covering the soil.

Such was at Rome the humble and obscure cradle of Christianity, of the worship of the God made man and born in a stable.

The early Christians, driven away from the city, had sought an asylum amid these ruins transformed into miserable huts, for which they had had to pay an exorbitant price. They were compelled, besides, to pay a heavy tax which was enforced by the harshest means.

The wits of Rome found in these poor people fit subjects for their most cutting epigrams. And yet, these despised Jews had brought to Rome two dogmas which her wise men had only suspected: the unity of God and the immortality of the soul.

But Paul was at Rome now, and he would doubtless overcome this contempt.

Soon after his arrival, he called together the principal men among the Jews. Before commencing the struggle and fulfilling his mission, he wished to know what he could expect from his people.

He told them what he had suffered and why he had been delivered into the hands of the Romans.

"Has any one coming from Judea, or any letter that you may have received," he asked, "given you cause to think ill of me?"

Those whom he had assembled answered negatively.

"But," said the most influential, "we would like to learn from you something about this sect, which every one here and elsewhere contradict."

Paul spoke to them, with his magnificent eloquence, of the Kingdom of God, of Jesus Christ whose coming was announced by Moses and the prophets.

But the Jews shook their heads in sign of doubt, and only a few believed in his words.

Such was Paul's first sermon in Rome.

The prophecy of Isaiah was being accomplished.

Paul had commenced with the Jews, but their hardened hearts had remained closed to his words; the time had come when he must turn to the Romans.

There lived in Rome, at that time, a great philosopher named Seneca.

Every one knows his life and his works, so full of elevated thoughts and belief, that Saint Jerome did not hesitate to rank him with the Christian authors, and designated him as: *our Seneca* (*Seneca noster.*)

This distinguished writer having incurred Nero's displeasure and fearing for his life, had moved from the Palatine to the *Alta Semita*, one of the least populated districts of Rome, where he lived in retirement and obscurity, trying to be forgotten.

He had gradually renounced the pleasures of the world, and devoted his time to study.

One day, as he sat alone, silent, and absorbed in his books, his servant announced a stranger who wished to speak to him.

The philosopher hesitated, for it might be a spy or a messenger from the Emperor, but, upon reflection he ordered the visitor to be introduced.

A man appeared on the threshold; having cast a glance at his poor garments, and his intelligent features, Seneca recognized in his visitor one of those Jews already so numerous in Rome.

He guessed right; it was a Jew, it was Paul, the Apostle, who had called on Seneca the philosopher.

CHAPTER VI.

PAUL AND SENECA.

THE philosopher made a gesture of impatience, as if the visit was not altogether agreeable to him.

Paul waited in silence. His deportment was modest, but it betrayed no embarrassment.

There was a strange light about his countenance which a man like Seneca could not fail to notice. He made him sign to approach.

Paul complied, and with honorable deference, made the customary salutation of the Romans: he brought his right hand to his lips, and bowed his head from left to right.

But Seneca did not complete the ceremony by extending his hand to the new comer, as was the practice between friends.

Paul did not seem to notice the cold reserve of this first meeting, but hastened to present to Seneca the long and thin strips of *scytale* which he held in his hand, saying:

"This is from your brother Gallion."

The *scytale* was a secret letter. A few sheets of thin parchment, cut in varied forms, were added together, then rolled around a small cylinder made of wood or metal, upon which they then wrote. The letter being written was unrolled and handed to the person who was to carry it.

To connect the words thus divided, it required a cylinder exactly similar to the one upon which the letter had been written, and the greatest precision and care in the manner of adjusting the parchment around it.

Seneca took the letter from the hand of the apostle, and having sought the cylinder corresponding to his brother's proceeded to perform the difficult operation of reconstructing the missive.

"This letter is very old," he remarked when he was able to read the date.

"Yes, it was handed me by your brother more than two years ago. Since, I have been a captive and I am one still. I came to Rome because I appealed to Cæsar.

"I pity you," said Seneca simply.

The apostle made no answer, and waited for his host to accomplish his difficult task.

At last, Seneca proceeded to read the letter. From time to time, he interrupted his reading to contemplate the apostle with mingled astonishment and curiosity.

But the time had not yet come for Paul to speak.

"My brother writes me," said Seneca when he had done reading, "that you are a rare genius—a great orator and a great philosopher."

"I am," said Paul, "only the last among the servants of God, and all my strength is in Jesus Christ."

"In fact," remarked Seneca, without manifesting the least surprise at this strange answer, "my brother adds that you are a Christian. Is this true, my dear Paulus—such, I believe is your name."

"It is so true and serious a fact," said the apostle firmly, and covering the philosopher with his ardent gaze, "that in two years Nero will have me beheaded, not for the accusation

now pending against me, but for the faith of my divine master."

"What: would you give your life for this superstition?"

"At this very instant, I would! But the time has not yet come; I have a mission to fulfill, it must be terminated."

"What may be this mission, dear Paulus?"

"To teach Rome the kingdom of God and His justice; to help Peter to found the immovable, eternal Church! . . ."

"This Peter, I have heard of him, dear Paulus; the things he announces are strange and impossible!"

"Listen, Seneca," said the apostle with authority, "I tell you, in truth, you cannot understand them."

"Am I not a philosopher, and a philosopher of some merit?" said Seneca with pride.

"The God I proclaim reveals Himself to simple hearts; He disdains the vain science of the world. He conceals Himself from the philosophers of whom you speak."

"But what do you pretend? Will this Rome which you wish to teach, be more humble and better prepared than I am? Do you think she will listen to your voice?"

"The Spirit of God will inspire me what to say, and Jesus Christ will do the remainder. Seneca! Seneca! Rome, so rebellious now, shall bow her head! She will be like a little child in God's hand! Ere long, the Christians will be so numerous, that if they should go away, Rome would remain an immense desert!"

"And I, dear Paulus," said the philosopher, smiling, "shall I be with you?"

"No, Seneca, you shall esteem my doctrine, but you will not embrace it. You will see in it but a fine system of philosophy from which you will draw new thoughts. Posterity will find in your works certain echoes of my words and of our sacred books; but you will never go further."

"Why so, dear Paulus? If your doctrine is the truth, I ask no better than to be numbered among your disciples."

"One cannot become my disciple as one would become the disciple of Plato, of Aristotle, or of the other philosophers. I have told you that my God does not reveal Himself to the superb and mighty, and to follow Jesus Christ who died on the cross, one must like Him carry his cross . . ."

"The cross! The slaves' instrument of torture! Indeed, my dear Paulus . . ."

"I am mad, think you, Seneca? This is what you were about to say? Well, let it even be so, I am mad! And it is this madness I want to teach in Rome, and which will triumph over Rome and over the whole world!"

"Explain your meaning, dear Paulus, for I cannot comprehend you! The cross, Jesus Christ, the Christians, Rome, the Universe! By Jupiter! what is all this!"

It would be impossible for us to render in all its magnificence the inspired language of the apostle, to make the divine power felt, which flashed like the lightning in the darkness of the night.

Paul first explained to the philosopher how, from a persecutor of the Christians, he had become one of the warmest advocates of the new religion.

He made an admirable picture of that religion which, tracing its origin to the earliest times, had continued to live through centuries until the present time.

He spoke of the Christ promised to the world, announced by the prophets and hailed by all the generations. He said how, the time being accomplished, Jesus had come in that poverty which He wished to honor on earth; His divine teachings; His miracles: His death on the cross; His glorious resurrection; the preaching of His apostles; the good news spreading over the world, and, everywhere, the legions of Christ assembling to glorify Him.

Raising the veil of the future, he showed the temples crumbling down, philosophy vanishing before the Gospel, the old creeds destroyed, the nations of the earth embracing the cross, mankind forming one brotherhood, and Rome the queen of the world by Christ's standard—not of that world about to perish, but of the whole earth renascent and regenerated!

A transfiguration had taken place in Paul; his features were resplendent with apostolic light.

Seneca listened in silent awe, crushed under those burning words which surpassed in sublimity all that he had ever dreamt.

Without, all nature harmonized with this imposing scene. as though all must hush before God's messenger. No noise disturbed the atmosphere; all was wrapped in that solemn stillness which marks the mysterious hour when prayer ascends slowly to Heaven.

A deep and silent pause followed the apostle's prophetic words.

"Gallion is right," said Seneca at last, "you are an admirable genius!"

"What matters! Seneca, it is my doctrine, not me, which you must admire!"

"Have you not told me, but a moment ago, that I would not believe? Why, then, have you come to me?"

"Because the time is near, when the religion of Christ would be for you a supreme consolation."

"What do you mean?"

"Seneca, do you not think that a single word from Nero"

"Ah! Paulus, are you then a messenger of death?"

"Seneca, Seneca! Christ's apostles bring life; as for death, it is in the hands of God, He it is who sends it."

"So," said the philosopher, with a smile, "it is a prophecy; is the hour near?"

"Perhaps it is," replied the apostle.

"So let it be, then, I do not fear death. I thank you for the warning."

"Seneca, believe in Christ! Ah! you may do so yet, notwithstanding what I have said."

"That is possible, my dear Paulus; I love all that is beautiful, and your doctrine is beautiful. But a philosopher must compare and reflect. I must take some time to decide. Come and see me again. You are friendly to me, my dear Paulus, and for my part I am inclined to love you. How I would wish to be of some service to you! But, as you see, I have now little credit."

"I thank you gratefully, Seneca; like yours, my time is marked, and no one, not even Nero, can change the designs of God. My hope is in Him, and I need no other protection. Farewell, Seneca; in the name of the living God, think of what you have heard to-day."

The apostle left, his heart filled with bitter discouragement, for he saw that he had not conquered this soul for Jesus Christ.

Seneca did not forget the apostle. He saw him again several times, and conversed with him on the same important subject. But Seneca was one of those men on whom extreme civilization leaves an ineffaceable stamp.

Marble is never more impenetrable than when the workman, according to the ancient saying: "has passed his thumb over it," to rub out the last and faint marks left by his chisel.

Seneca possessed all the elegant finish of a fine statue. The philosophy of Christianity could not penetrate that polished surface, upon which the philosophy of Greece and Rome had scarcely made an impression.

Nevertheless, he studied the Christian religion; he heard Peter and Paul; he read their epistles; he enjoyed the first fragrance of this doctrine, which, like a beautiful flower, was blooming before his eyes. He did as all do, who admire the flower, but care not to know whence it came or why it blooms. He used it to adorn his own philosophy.

He revised his works, and without modifying the original sense and plan, introduced in them new thoughts suggested by the sacred writings or by Paul's epistles.

Hence certain words and thoughts in Seneca's works, which astonish one, unless one knows whence he got them. But the truth never penetrated his mind.

A few months after his first interview with Paul, Seneca was sitting at table, with his wife, Pompeia Paulina, and two friends, when a centurion presented himself bearing the fatal sentence.

As a last favor, Nero permitted his old tutor to select his mode of death.

Seneca caused his veins to be opened, but no blood came out. He took poison, but the drug had no effect on his worn out frame. He then ordered a hot bath to be prepared.

As he stepped into it, he sprinkled a little water over his slaves, saying:

"I make this libation to Jupiter liberator!"

A groan was heard, and a voice called out "Seneca! Seneca!"

The philosopher looked round: it was Paul hastening to make a last effort.

It was too late! The vapor of the bath deprived the doomed man of his senses, and soon after he expired.

A deep sorrow could be read on Paul's face, as he contemplated the man he had sought to save.

His mission was at an end, and turning his back upon the scene of desolation, the apostle went away, plunged in thought.

CHAPTER VII.

LIGHT PENETRATING CHAOS.

PAUL had soon to appear before Cæsar, to whom he had appealed. With a prince like Nero there could be no complication in judicial proceedings, and the apostle had little trouble in clearing himself of the charges brought by the Jews, and which Nero could scarcely comprehend.

What did Nero care about this quarrel between dying Judaism, and already glorious Christianity? He looked upon it as a question of local interest which did not concern him.

But Nero was very curious, and Paul was an extraordinary man. All Rome was talking of the wonders he had performed in company with Peter. For, the two apostles while preaching the religion of Jesus Christ, had, in fact, proved His divinity by numerous miracles accomplished in His name. They had healed the sick; made the lame walk, the deaf hear and the blind see, they had brought the dead back to life.

Nero, at that time, was giving the people sumptuous exhibitions, which he desired to make forever celebrated. A man had promised, like Icarius of old, to rise, flying, to the clouds. This was Simon, the Magician, who strove by every means to rival the apostles, and to bring their mission into discredit, by claiming to perform the most wonderful acts, such as animating statues, changing stones into bread, flying in the air, and conjuring spirits.

What a good fortune for Nero, what an attraction added to his public games, if these three men could appear there and struggle, under his eyes, for the pre-eminence in supernatural power! All three are Jews; what more simple than that he should be the judge between them!

But miracles are not made to satisfy vain curiosity. So as Jesus Christ had refused to comply with Herod's request that he should perform a prodigy, Paul replied to Nero that Simon would not triumph; but he promised nothing marvelous.

On the next day, Simon appeared in the amphitheatre. He was hailed with delight by the multitude, for his

popularity was great in Rome. The Senate had even had the baseness to erect his statue in the island of the Tiber, with this inscription: *Simoni Deo Sancto!*

Peter and Paul, present, but unobserved by the crowd, were praying to God that the spirit of falsehood should not gain a victory over the spirit of truth, and that this profaner of sacred things, this enemy of His name, should not appear before the people as possessing more power than they who had been clothed with His strength, and were sent to confound imposture.

The Emperor having given the signal, Simon arose in the air, and, it is alleged, hovered awhile, over the amphitheatre.

But, suddenly, he fell, hurled to the ground by the hand of God.

He was picked up, crippled and bleeding; and the people who had applauded him, now hooted him with derisive contempt. The magician would not survive his shame; having been carried to a neighboring house, he threw himself from the casement, and dashed his brains out on the pavement.

Nero was far from satisfied with the tragical adventure of the magician whom he had received at his court with much favor. But, if he entertained any resentment against the two apostles, he did not show it at that time.

After all, little did Peter and Paul care about Nero's resentment.

They returned to their apostolic labors; they lived, as they had done heretofore, by the work of their hands, amidst the holy Jewish women who had followed them to Rome, and who gave to their sex those admirable examples of charity in good works, of Christian poverty, of evangelical chastity, and of all the virtues which have since created so many heroines of Christian grace, love and devotion.

Some of these women had never left the Virgin mother of Jesus Christ. Together with Saint John, they had followed her to Ephesus, where they had remained until her death, which, according to the general opinion, took place in the year 48.

Since that time, they had successively removed to Rome, to join the apostles and assist them in propagating the Gospel.

Meanwhile, the holy word became more and more fruitful,

and new Christians of all ranks, of all age and sex, came daily to increase the assembly of the faithful. It was then that some uneasiness commenced to be felt concerning this new sect and its numerous proselytes—this superstition which threatened to take the place of the ancient creed, or, to speak with more exactness, the old religious habits of the Roman people.

It was besides, a complete renewal of the social fabric; and some already foresaw in these recent doctrines the condemnation and final destruction of the institutions upon which Rome leaned, and which had hitherto constituted her strength. War was therefore declared against these detestable innovators who came to disturb the quiet in which, for ages past, Rome had slumbered, mistress and dominatrix of the universe.

The first hostilities were commenced by the writers and sages who denounced "for their odious acts, those Christians, whose chief, *one named Christ*, during the reign of Tiberius was sentenced by Pontius Pilate to suffer the most infamous penalty."

These calumnies furnished Nero the pretext he needed to justify himself from the charge of having kindled the famous conflagration which, during six days, devoured Rome with such frightful intensity, that of the fourteen quarters composing that immense city, only four remained standing and intact.

Nero, the perpetrator of this horrible act, to shield his own criminality, dared to accuse the Christians of it. This was the true and only cause of the first persecution. It was atrocious. The most barbarous and extraordinary tortures, says Tacitus, were invented for these Christians whose crimes had long designated them to the public hate; and this went so far that the torturers felt pity for their victims.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul both perished during this persecution. Paul, the Roman citizen, was beheaded; Peter was crucified like Christ, but with his head downwards.

The two apostles suffered martyrdom on the same day—29th of June, in the year of Christ, 67.

Peter, prince of the apostles, was succeeded by Linus, who governed the Church during twelve years, as the second bishop of Rome.

Linus was succeeded by Cletus or Anacletus, an Athenian by birth, and a disciple of Saint Peter, who had converted him. He governed the Apostolical See from the year 78 to the year 91.

Clemens, (St. Clement of Rome,) fourth bishop, therefore filled the chair of Saint Peter at the time our narrative commenced.

He was of Jewish origin and a descendant of Jacob, from his mother's side, for his father was Faustinus, a native Roman. We believe we do not err in affirming that he belonged to that Clemens family, so numerous in Rome at that time, and which was a branch of the Flavia family, whence came Vespasian and his two sons.

This more than probable hypothesis being admitted, Clemens, the head of the nascent Church and the representative of Jesus Christ on earth, would have been the relation of Domitian, the High Pontiff, in whose person dwelt all the authority of paganism.

The capital of the world, destitute of all religious faith, had become successively the centre of the most divergent philosophical doctrines, and of the most opposed creeds.

Egypt had bequeathed to it her mysterious divinities; Chaldea had sent her wizards and astrologers; from the distant countries of the East, Apollonius of Thyane had imported the philosophy of the Brachmans, the divinations of the Magi, the Indian theogonies, and even the theories of the gymnosophists he had visited in Higher-Egypt and Ethiopia.

Eastern customs had already penetrated into Rome, and her priests appeared in the solemnities of the sacrifices, wearing the Phrygian tiara, and surrounded with all the sacerdotal pomp of Armenia.

The sacred books brought from Jerusalem had found public interpreters in Rome, where the Mosaic traditions were known to all. Quite recently, Josephus, a prisoner since Vespasian's time, had roused public curiosity by his numerous writings, in which the Jewish antiquities were revealed.

Gaul and Germany, represented by Velleda and Ganna, the two young priestesses, had made known the dogmas of Teutates and Odin, those northern divinities, upon whose altars our ancestors sacrificed human victims.

Finally, Christianity now loomed on the horizon, with the imposing cortege of its apostles, its first martyrs, its virgins, its venerable and holy women, whose words were instructions, whose acts were examples, whose whole life was a precept!

In appearance, the heathen divinities of ancient Rome remained in possession of the same prerogatives as of old. The temples were as sumptuous, and the ceremonies as magnificent as ever. But with all this outward show, there was no faith in the hearts—nothing but the force of habit, so difficult to change or destroy.

Rome was encumbered with the statues of its gods, to such an extent, that Suetonius wrote that in this city, with its population of three millions, it was easier to meet a god than a man; but the citizens, indifferent or sneering, walked amidst this inanimate multitude without giving them a thought or a look.

Long before, Cicero in his treatise on the *Nature of the Gods*, had ridiculed this vain display of a gross, indecent or puerile religion, and ruined its power by affirming there was not a toothless old woman but who defied the anger of Olympus and laughed at the powerless bolts of its false divinities.

The philosophers and mathematicians had continued this work of destruction, and had gone so far, that they had to be checked. In the year 805, (52 of Christ,) the Emperor Claudius had been compelled, for the second time, to drive them from Italy; and, quite recently, (in 836, A.D. 83,) Domitian had decreed again their expulsion.

The motives for both of these measures were identical: the astrologers, mathematicians, and philosophers were reproached with their declamations and controversies, before which no religious or social institution could exist.

It was evident that a new creed must take the place of the ancient one, thus abandoned and condemned by public opinion; but thinking minds asked with anxiety, which, among so many religions proposed to the people, would finally rule in Rome?

As the benighted traveler scans the heavens to discover the star which will guide his steps, so did Rome, in her dismay, ask that a glimmer should light the horizon upon which her destinies should be written.

This much desired light, uncertain at first, and unseen, then discovered and recognized, had suddenly burst on the dark recesses of that immense chaos; and, singular contradiction! whilst those who held it in their hands were denounced and persecuted, it was to this light that all eyes turned, that the secret aspirations of all tended.

The people were not abandoning the insane creed of their ancestors, to follow Apollonius of Thyane, notwithstanding his wonders, or Ganna, notwithstanding her seductions; but they ran to Christ, to the tortures which they must suffer in His name, to the more difficult self-denial whose long and secret but bitter trials they would have to endure.

We find in the writers of that time, in the historians and poets, the visible proof of this gravitation of the Roman world towards Christianity. It was hailed as a hope, and accepted as a certainty; in it were resumed the anxieties of the present, and the destinies foreseen in the future.

Domitian looking around with fear, had ascertained that he was surrounded by Christians. In the ranks of the people were to be found innumerable disciples of Christ; they filled the legions; the Emperor's palace, his own family could not be preserved from the alarming filtration of a sect which, penetrating everywhere, made its mysterious action felt in all ranks of society.

The Emperor thought that the time had come when he must oppose with energy any enterprise against the religion of Rome and the empire; in his double capacity of pontiff and prince, he resolved to guard against an invasion so formidable.

He endeavored to restore the creed and revive the traditions. He instituted new feasts, and placed himself personally under the protection of Minerva, goddess of arms and wisdom.

But, at the same time, he gave Rome a deplorable example of folly and impious audaciousness. He proclaimed himself a god, and caused his own statue, cast in gold, to be placed in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, the first temple in the world!

The people saw with indignation this grand-son of a poor undertaker of public works daring to proclaim himself the equal of their ancient and most honored divinities; and they understood all the better the greatness of Christianity, where the idea of One God, eternal and infinite, made impossible such insane usurpation by a simple mortal.

This moral anguish felt by Domitian, his incredible acts of madness, his attempts at religious restoration, were necessary to explain the cause of certain events.

Thus in his terror of being despoiled of the empire by the sons of David, according to the popular prediction: "Those who come from Judea will become the masters of things; such are the decrees of Fate;" he had sent an officer to Judea, to ascertain whether there still existed any descendant of that odious race, once despised but now the subject of his deepest anxieties.

Thus, with a view to presenting to the people a great and terrible spectacle capable of reawakening the religious zeal of old, he caused the Grand-Vestal to be closely watched, with the hope of detecting her in some fault which would justify him in ordering her death with all the fearful display attending the punishment reserved for virgins who broke their vows!

Finally, his family being suspected of Christianity, this executioner of his own kindred, wanted to know what victims he could sacrifice to his fury, so that while offering a memorable and bloody expiation to the gods, he would secure himself against any possible usurpation.

Such were the designs of the Emperor when he departed from Rome to put an end to the war against the Dacians. It is no wonder, then, that his infamous gang of informers should use the greatest zeal and activity to satisfy him.

We have seen that Armillatus and Palfurius Sora, both consular men, had been especially designated to watch Flavius Clemens and the two Flavius Domitillas. Marcus Regulus whilst undertaking to superintend the shameful mission of these two patricians, and trying also to discover whether the Emperor's relatives were followers of Christ, had besides accepted the task of criminating Cornelia and Metellus Celer, whom he hated personally.

Domitian attached great importance to the conviction of the Grand-Vestal. He regretted that he had lost the opportunies presented during the earlier part of his reign, to proceed against several virgins of Vesta, and to recall to the strict fulfillment of their fearful obligations, those priestesses who had become relaxed in their duties, through the indulgence of Vespasian and Titus.

He had once already forgiven Cornelia. It is true that the accusation was based on the most vague suspicions. But the two sisters Ocellates and Varonilla had been found guilty, and he had consented to let them chose their mode of death, and to banish their accomplices, whereas the former should have been buried alive, and the latter condemned to die under the lash of the pontiffs.

It was indispensable that reparation should be made for such faults, and something done to compensate this indulgence.

To this end Marcus Regulus employed all his industry. This worthy individual had admirably prepared his plan. By corrupting Doris, the divine Aurelia's hair-dresser, and by cultivating the acquaintance of the confiding Palæstrion, he hoped to discover, at the same time, the relations existing between Metellus Celer and the Grand-Vestal, and the affiliation of Flavius Clemens and his family with the worshippers of Christ.

But whilst Domitian was endeavoring to protect his throne, God sent before him the bishop Clemens, the prince of this new society, the supreme pontiff of the new Creed!

And whilst Marcus Regulus was seeking to discover the secrets of the divine Aurelia's household, God was sending there the humble slave through whom Christ was to be embraced with undying love!

Part Second—The Slave.

CHAPTER I.

HYMENEAL DISAPPOINTMENTS OF A VESPILLO.

WE must ask the reader to throw a retrospective glance on certain events which transpired in the tonsorial establishment of the barber Eutrapeles, a few months previous to the incidents related in the second chapter of this book.

Eutrapeles' shop was one of the most elegant and fashionable establishments of the kind in Rome, where they were quite numerous and generally well patronized. This shop, situated in the centre of the Forum, not far from the Græcostasis, had formerly belonged to Augustus' barber, Licinius, whom Horace mentions in his Poetical Art.

Eutrapeles who had inherited it from his father—himself a tonsor of merit—left nothing undone to make his shop worthy of the fame of its founder. He entertained probably, the secret hope that Domitian might confer upon him the dignity Licinius had received at the hands of Augustus, who made a senator of his barber.

Licinius owed that distinguished honor less to personal merit than to the rare accomplishments of a magpie which he had taught to recite verses in praise of the Emperor. Eutrapeles' great ambition was to possess a bird whose talents would obliterate the memory of his predecessor's magpie. He

succeeded, after several years of patient teaching, in training one whose incontestable superiority would have thrown Licinius into a fit of jealous despair.

The magpie of this ambitious barber imitated with rare perfection, the human voice, the cries of animals, and even the sounds of instruments. Upon a sign from its master, it recited, with great accuracy, a pompous eulogy on Domitian. As a matter of course, Eutrapeles never failed to give the signal to his bird whenever a senator, a pontiff or some distinguished patrician came to entrust their heads into his skilful hands.

The *Trossuli*, or dandies of that time, crowded the lucky barber's shop; and the matrons, the queens of beauty and fashion, never passed by without stopping their litter, their *carpentum*—the four wheel carriage exclusively used by matrons of high rank—or their light chariots, lined with silk and inlaid with ivory, which they drove, themselves, with skill and daring. Eutrapeles' magpie was a great success.

It must be admitted that the barber was an artist of uncommon merit. The *beaux* proclaimed him the first tonsor in Rome. When a Trossulus came out of his hands, he could show himself safely at the porticos or on the Appian way; his head bore the seal of that supreme elegance which, at all times, has attracted the eyes and claimed the admiration of the crowd.

The women found in Eutrapeles' shop those thousand articles for their secret toilet which they would have sought in vain in the shops of Minucius' portico, of the *Villa-Publica*, the *Via Sacra* or the *Septa Julia*, with their varied and rich assortments.

No other tonsor could show such an abundant supply of false tresses and glossy curls, of every variety of shade, from the flaming red to the deepest black; nowhere else could such perfect teeth be found, whether of bone, or ivory, or extracted from the human jaw; nowhere those pliable straps of leather, those aromatic pomades of bean-paste, destined to repair the ruins caused by time—the wrinkles, the angular form, the toothless gums, or the head prematurely bald.

When a matron, struggling against the inroads of age,

applied to Eutrapeles to simulate with a sooty ointment of his own invention, her absent eye brows, and, to give new brilliancy to her eyes, she looked as if Venus herself had traced the delicate black lines which added their favorable shadow to the rosy and fresh complexion drawn from the small alabaster and pewter pots, which the estimable tradesman sold for their weight in gold.

Eutrapeles seemed to possess all the secrets of the *Fortuna virilis*, the goddess dear to the Roman ladies, because she concealed the defects of their beauty from the indiscreet eyes of the men. His shop was better attended than the two temples of this kind goddess, situated on the Palatine bridge and the Carmentales gate.

But, amidst all these perfections, Eutrapeles had some slight faults: he was impertinent, vain and loquacious in the extreme. For these defects as well as for his qualities, he was without equal in the tonsorial fraternity. There was no news, political or private, no wedding or funeral, no scandalous story or kitchen gossip, that Eutrapeles did not know in all their particulars, and was not always ready to repeat to every new comer.

Withal, there was a mystery in the life of this man, so jovial in appearance, so familiar and talkative.

Almost every night, when Eutrapeles had sent away his numerous attendants and the robust Syrian girl—the only servant in this bachelor's home; when he was quite alone behind his closed shutters, he gave a preconcerted signal, and, immediately, a man slipped in through a door which he discreetly held ajar. Eutrapeles had long conversations with this man.

Who was he, and what was said in these frequent interviews? The neighbors had tried to find out, but their curiosity had been invariably baffled.

On the evening of the fifth day preceding the calends of January, 842, (28th of December, 841, for the Romans counted the days backwards,) and some time after the Saturnalia, which commenced on the 16th, previous to said calends, (17th of December,) and lasted one week, Eutrapeles and his nightly visitor were sitting in the furthest end of the shop, according to their custom, and conversing in a subdued tone of voice, when a noise was heard at the door of the shop.

The countenances of the two men expressed singular alarm and anxiety, but the familiar sound of a voice calling from outside, "Eutrapeles! Eutrapeles!" soon quieted their fears.

"It is Gurges, the Vespillo," said the barber; "he brings me certain articles of my trade, which I shall need for the gifts of the January calends. My lord Regulus, have the goodness to step into this *tepidarium*, (bath-room;) this little affair will soon be settled."

Regulus disappeared behind the closet door, and Eutrapeles went to let Gurges in. He was struck with the wild expression of the Vespillo's features and the disorder of his dress.

"Have you failed to bring the hair and the teeth I ordered?" exclaimed the barber, whose first thought, like a good tradesman's, was for the evil consequences likely to result from the Vespillo's want of punctuality.

The latter made no answer, but he threw at Eutrapeles' feet six magnificent, long suits of hair, and a handful of freshly extracted teeth.

"Gurges, you are a great man!" cried the admiring barber. "By Venus! you are the king of Vespillos. Ah! Philœnis, Gellia, Lesbia, Marcella, Lydia, and Phyllis, how charming you will look when these tresses, plaited by my skilful hands, will adorn your heads. And you, Vetustilla, what an admirable set of teeth I will put between your rosy lips. But what is the matter with you, my poor Gurges?"

"Eutrapeles, I must speak to you," said Gurges gloomily, but in a firm voice.

"Impossible, my dear Gurges, impossible at this hour," replied Eutrapeles, remembering Regulus' presence.

"I said I wanted to speak to you, and I shall speak," repeated the vespillo almost in anger. "The time is favorable; I selected it purposely."

"Speak, then, Gurges, but be quick, for it is late, and I have but little time to give you," replied the barber, who saw that the only way to get rid of the vespillo was to listen to him, and who hoped besides that the conversation would not be long.

Caius-Tongilianus-Vespertinus-Gurges belonged to the worthy class of the agents of Libitina, the goddess of funerals, and his title of vespillo could be rendered in our language by that of "undertaker's aid." He was the son of Tongilianus, the master of ceremonies of the inexorable divinity.

This dignity for nearly a century had been transmitted from father to son, in the Tongliana family, and gave its chief the right of marching at the head of funeral processions, preceded by lictors clad in mourning.

Caius was only a vespillo; but he would succeed his father, and when we have the prospect of a high rank, we are looked upon as somebody in this world, whatever be our present condition.

Caius Tongilianus had taken the surname of *Vespertinus* as indicating his profession, exercised in the dark hours of the evening. *Gurges* was a glorious surname, the reward of his great deeds; it meant a bold drinker who feared neither the number of the cyathi nor the depth of the amphoræ.

The business connections of Gurges and Eutrapeles will be easily understood. Eutrapeles was in constant need of hair for the head-dresses of the matrons, his customers, and of teeth for the repair of the dismantled jaws confided to his care.

Gurges alone could supply him with these indispensable articles of trade. His expert asssistants could strip a head of its hair as quickly as an Indian takes his fallen enemy's scalp, and rob a jawbone of its masticating ornaments with the skill of a modern dentist.

This industry was of course illegal; and it was no easy matter to avoid the vigilance of the patrols appointed by the capital Triumvir to watch over the inviolability of the tombs. But Gurges managed things so skillfully, that he owed his surname of Vespertinus to the ability with which he baffled the watchfulness of the police.

Were the Roman ladies aware of the origin of those soft tresses, arranged so gracefully over their brow by the skillful hands of their maids? We incline to a negative answer, for Eutrapeles was too gallant a tonsor, his delicacy of feeling was too exquisite, that he should frighten his charming customers with such revelations.

Albeit, Gurges, who had not remarked the embarrassment and hesitation with which Eutrapeles had consented to listen to his confidences, took a seat, and made himself as comfortable as possible, preparing, evidently, for a long conversation.

"Eutrapeles," he began, in a solemn tone, "you were

aware of my project of a marriage with Cecilia, the young girl who lives with her father, not far from the Maximus Circus, and in the vicinity of the temple of Venus-Libitina, my favorite divinity! Well, by the Fates, the match is broken!"

"Impossible, my dear Gurges, impossible!" exclaimed the barber, who was remarkably fond of using this adjective. "And what may be the reason? Has old Cecilius refused his consent?"

"Old Cecilius cannot oppose my marriage; he owes me ten thousand sestertii; but it's the little one who will no longer consent . . ."

"Had she ever consented?"

Gurges seemed to think the question impertinent.

"Let us not quarrel about words," he remarked, "since whether she *had* consented or no longer consents, amounts to the same thing."

"Well, my dear Gurges, how can you help that?" remarked Eutrapeles, who was anxious to end the conversation.

"How can I help that? Is this the answer to be expected from a friend? But, you careless tonsor, don't you see that my ten thousand sestertii are lost, since Cecilius does not possess a *stips!* And this is not it! The little one loves another man! Look you?" he cried, striking with his fist the table near which they were seated; "I can't stand that, Eutrapeles! Yes, by Atropos, Lachesis, Pluto and Proserpina, I shall have revenge for this refusal!"

Gurges was getting excited. The barber was growing impatient.

"Ah! you are a Christian, a Jewess, and you do not want me for your husband! I . . ."

A noise like that of a person starting involuntarily, interrupted the angry Gurges. It came from the adjoining closet.

"Eutrapeles, are we alone?" asked the vespillo with alarm.

"Quite alone, friend Gurges," replied the barber, hastily. "It is probably water falling in the bath-tub of the *tepidarium*. But, my amiable vespillo," he continued, drawing his seat nearer, and evincing a sudden interest in his visitor's story, "you must try not to get into a passion,

and not to go so fast. Come, Gurges, tell me the beginning of this love affair of yours, if you wish me to understand the case fully."

"It is a long story, Eutrapeles, and you are in such a hurry. But I shall abbreviate."

"I can always find time to listen to my friends when they are in trouble, Go on, my dear Gurges."

The vespillo commenced his story:

"It is about a year since Cecilius who was a mere scribe in Saturn's Treasury, was appointed collector of the taxes levied on those cursed Jews of the Capena gate—may the Hades receive them! Cecilius removed to the neighborhood, and my father rented to him the small house we own near the Maximus Circus. You must know that Cecilius who is poorer than Thersites, has never paid us a single sesterce. On the contrary, it is my money which . . . but I must not anticipate. Cecilius had been a widower for several years; he had but one daughter, the ungrateful Cecilia!"

Here, the vespillo relieved his feelings by several long-drawn sighs, and resumed:

"Every morning, on my way to the temple of Venus Libitina, I would see her at her door, or at the window of her little *cubiculum*. I would then make her a friendly sign, to which she would reply with a pleasant nod. Cecilia, my dear Eutrapeles, has seen three lustra and a half (seventeen years and a half.) She is so beautiful that none of your fashionable matrons could compare with her. But, you have seen her, and you know that I do not exaggerate."

Eutrapeles nodded assent, and Gurges resumed:

"I resolved to push things briskly and to marry Cecilia. My father raised some objection because she had nothing; but I convinced him that all the troubles of married life come from the dowry (*veniunt a dote sagittæ*;) and besides, he yielded to this great consideration, that a vespillo—I don't know why—seldom finds a woman willing to marry him."

Gurges heaved four great sighs: two of regret for the past; two of sadness for the gloomy future.

"Having obtained my father's consent," he continued, "I called on Cecilius. You see, Eutrapeles, I was acting honorably. I spoke of marriage by *confarreation*, which gives the wife the title of matron, for I could not think of the

coemption which looks so much like buying a woman, or of the marriage by *usage*, which is hardly any better than concubinage. My future prospects are good enough, our fortune is known; I made these legitimate advantages appear, and, to be brief, Cecilius was delighted, and he accepted me for his son in law."

"And what did Cecilia say?" queried Eutrapeles.

"Cecilia said nothing;" acknowledged the vespillo.

"This was not giving you great hope," remarked Eutrapeles.

"My good tonsor," quote Gurges with a knowing air, "in such cases, women never reply anything."

"That may be," replied the barber simply. "Proceed."

"Time is a great master, and in time I trusted to soften that rebellious heart. We come now to the period when Cecilius commenced borrowing money from me and seemed to forget that he was my father's tenant. Yes, through the fallacious hope I entertained that Cecilia was getting better disposed in my favor, and that Cecilius would soon be my father in law, I allowed myself to be coaxed out of several important sums! Eutrapeles, it is an infamy, a downright robbery!" cried Gurges in whom the remembrance of his ten thousand sestertii seemed invariably to rouse a violent storm.

"My good friend," remarked Eutrapeles who had some literary pretension; "Juvenal, whom you know, has precisely addressed a fine epistle to Corvinus to console him for losing a like amount. You must read it, Gurges, those poets understand better than we do, how to pour balm on wounds."

"Finally," resumed the vespillo, "I was under the charm, although I must admit that matters were not progressing much; this did not prevent me from circulating the report of my approaching marriage; for it seemed to me impossible that Cecilia should not make the promise so often announced by her father. You remember, Eutrapeles, that I confided to you my hopes."

"Certainly, Gurges, I cannot have forgotten it, but amidst all these details, it seems to me you have forgotten something very essential."

"What is that, my dear tonsor?"

"You should have questioned Cecilia herself."

"I failed not to do so, Eutrapeles, but I obtained this answer, that my name—Gurges—did not suit her, and my trade of vespillo still less."

"Then, my friend, the game was lost."

"Young girls are so capricious, Eutrapeles. They desire to-morrow what they refused to-day."

"Agreed. But out of prudence, you should have held on to your sestertii until the matter was settled."

"I had already given them away, Eutrapeles."

"Was Cecilia aware of this?"

"Not at all. When Cecilius borrowed money from me, he always said: 'do not mention it to my daughter.' And Cecilia, when I wished to make her some slight presents, sent them back, saying she could not accept anything from me."

"But," said Eutrapeles, who wished to bring back the conversation to the essential point from which it was diverging; "you said something just now about Jews and Christians. What does it mean? Are these people in any way connected with the disappointment you have suffered?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Gurges; "that's the crowning piece! The wretches! This is the way the thing happened. Cecilius was in earnest; at least, I think so, for he was singularly flattered by the prospect of his daughter's marriage; it secured quiet comfort for his old age. He does not spare Cecilia, whom he calls rebellious and impious, and whose new superstition he says is infamous, and he wants to crush it. Cecilius is quite as angry as I am. The more so, as he would lose his place if it should be discovered. . . You understand?"

"Perfectly. But to the point, Gurges, to the point! *Semper ad eventum festina*, hasten towards the event."

"I am coming to it, Eutrapeles. But, in order to make things clear, I have to go into so many particulars. But I shall be brief. Here is the conversation I had yesterday—it is recent, as you see—with Cecilius; the catastrophe was not long following it. Tired with all those delays, I went, yesterday morning, to see Cecilius:

'Is your daughter here?' I asked.

'No, Gurges, she has gone to the *Forum pistorium*," (the bread-market.)

'Cecilius, are you aware that your daughter never remains at home during your absence? Where does she go?'

'My dear Gurges, she goes most of the time to the Palatine, to see a matron of high rank, who protects her, and whose name is Flavia Domitilla.'

"Look you, Eutrapeles, we are not alone here!" exclaimed Gurges, who had heard again a noise in the *tepidarium*. "I must see . . ."

The vespillo was rising to ascertain the cause of the noise, but Eutrapeles persuaded him once more that it was only the water flowing into the bath-tub.

Gurges appeared satisfied with the explanation, and resumed:

'You are sure of this?' I asked Cecilius.

'Perfectly sure, Gurges. My daughter goes there with an old woman named Petronilla, who lives there, near the Capena gate. What will you? My duties keep me away all day, and Cecilia must take some recreation. She has no mother to stay with her.'

"Certainly," I replied, somewhat soothed. Then I added: 'Well Cecilius, has she made up her mind yet?'

'No, Gurges, I am sorry to say that she seems to give little thought to what is the object of my daily entreaties.'

'It is evident she has not reflected enough upon marriage. Cecilius, an idea has suggested itself to my mind. What if we were to place your daughter under the influence of the little god *Jugatinus?*'

'It is a marvelous good thought, dear Gurges!'

'We shall fix a *sacellum* (a little chapel) in her *cubiculum*.'

'Have you a little god Jugatinus?'

'I bought one, yesterday, in the Triumphal way! And I showed to Cecilius a small statue of the little god, which I had brought concealed in my tunic. It was gilded, crowned with flowers, ornamented with small bands of yellow—the color of Hymen. 'Suppose we carry out our project immediately,' I added. 'When Cecilia returns, she will see the *sacellum*, and perhaps the little god will begin to operate, for she will naturally think that I alone could have had the idea of this delicate attention.'

'Nothing easier, my dear Gurges! But let us make haste, for Cecilia will soon return for the *jentaculum* (breakfast).'

"We went up to Cecilia's cubiculum," continued Gurges, "and penetrated into that sanctuary, until then forbidden to me."

Here the vespillo would have willingly expatiated on all his impressions, and had in fact commenced describing his tender emotion at the sight of Cecilia's virginal retreat, when Eutrapeles, who was anxiously expecting the conclusion, interrupted him:

"Gurges! Gurges!" he said affectionately, "it is getting late, my good friend. I understand your feelings—but let us make haste; what happened next?"

"We had just done arranging the *sacellum*, when we heard Cecilia's voice—as sweet as Philomela's! She was coming up to her cubiculum. We withdrew quickly, for we wished to enjoy, unseen, her surprise and to observe her countenance. Ah! Eutrapeles, how shall I relate what followed!"

"Courage, Gurges, courage, my friend!" said the tonsor who saw the catastrophe coming.

"Cecilia, as soon as she came in, discovered Jugatinus, and seizing it:—I remember those incredible words—'An idol in my room!' she cried, and the little god, hurled through the window, was broken to pieces on the street pavement!

'Daughter! daughter! What are you doing?' exclaimed Cecilius, who sprung forward, but too late, to prevent the rash act. 'Wretched girl, it is a sacrilege!'

'Ah! father, you were there! and you also, Gurges!' said she, recognizing me. 'I understand now! Well, so be it. The time has come when the truth must be known. Father, I am a Christian; and as a Christian, it was my duty to act as I have done! Gurges, she added, turning to me, 'cease to persecute me with your love, I can never be your wife.'

"I was overwhelmed," the vespillo continued; "I would live to be as old as Nestor, that this imposing, solemn scene, would remain green in my memory. Cecilia was calm, serene, so majestic, and, at the same time, so inflexible in her resolve, that I could not find a single word of entreaty. As for Cecilius, his anger was fearful to behold. He cursed his daughter, and I was compelled to hold him back, or he would have killed her. But he swore that Cecilia should renounce this infamous superstition, or that he would invoke

the law, and use all the authority of an offended father. The poor man saw misfortune and dishonor before him. Known as the father of a Christian, he must doubtless lose his office, the only resource of his old age."

'Ah! Cecilia!' he exclaimed, after this terrible outburst of anger had subsided, 'it is those Jews of Capena gate who have ruined you! I should have watched over you more carefully, and not permit you to keep company with that old Petronilla.'

"These last words were for me as a ray of light. I hurried away to follow the threads of this infamous web by which a father was robbed of his child, and I of the only treasure I had ever wished to possess. I know all, Eutrapeles! It is but too true! Cecilia is a Jewess. That old woman, Petronilla, has perverted her. She and a matron of high rank, Flavia Domitilla, the emperor's relation, have inveigled her into this superstition. And I, I am only Gurges, the vespillo; an odious being, forsaken and scoffed at, who has paid his shame ten thousand sestertii! O vengeance! O Furies! What shall I do, Eutrapeles?"

The question was asked in a tone of the deepest despondency. Eutrapeles seemed to reflect.

"Friend Gurges," he said at last, "this is a very serious matter; but I shall come to your assistance, doubt it not. However, I shall require a few days of reflection. I see a means, but it must be used with prudence on account of Flavia Domitilla. We shall work things right. It is very late; go home, my friend, and leave me the care of your vengeance."

The tone in which this was said was so earnest, so full of assurance, that Gurges doubted not that he had found a powerful auxiliary. He allowed himself to be gently led out of the shop by the crafty barber, who, replying to his supplications by renewed promises of assistance, bade him good night, and closed the door upon him with great carefulness.

When Eutrapeles returned to the end of the shop where he and Gurges had had the interesting conversation we have narrated, he found Regulus waiting.

"Well, my lord?" said he.

"By Hercules! Eutrapeles, this is wonderful luck. At the very start I am on the track of those Christians of whom

I was speaking to you when the vespillo came in, and who give so much uneasiness to the divine Domitian. This little girl will be very useful to us, we shall know everything through her."

"You have your plan?"

"Certainly, Eutrapeles. Whilst listening to your conversation, certain ideas have suggested themselves to my mind. In the first place it is necessary that the vespillo should get back his ten thousand sestertii, and that his claim against Cecilius should pass into my hands. I shall have a hold on him by this means, and by making him uneasy, besides, about his situation, I shall lead him to do what I please. To-morrow you will have the money—see that the transfer is made without delay. Ah! whilst I think of it, in order to remain free in our movements, we must use the name of a third party. I shall make him known to you in good time. As for the girl, we shall see what is to be done; I shall attend to it. With a little care, prudence and precision, your promise to the vespillo will be fulfilled without giving yourself the least trouble. Good night."

And Regulus, leaving the tavern, was soon lost in the darkness which filled the streets of Rome. As Eutrapeles closed his door, a hopeful smile illumined his features:

"Who knows," he thought; "but that this matter will result in securing for me the senatorial purple with which the divine Augustus rewarded my predecessor, Licinius!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CRYPT OF LIBITINA'S WOODS.

CECILIUS was an old freedman who had purchased his freedom with the patiently accumulated proceeds of his daily savings on the *diarium* or ration of wheat, granted to the slaves by their masters.

He was nevertheless a Roman citizen, for he had stipulated the great manumission which conferred upon the freedman the same rights as his former owner enjoyed.

After passing forty years in bondage, Cecilius had found himself, at last, master of his own person, and at liberty to carve his own fortune; but, for a long time, his change of condition had only brought him the misfortune and hard trials which were the share of the weak in a society where public compassion—this Christian and modern virtue—did not exist.

In fact, the only assistance tendered disdainfully to the poor—not to console, but rather to debase them still more and to keep them in perpetual dependence—consisted in the *sportule* or the *panariolum*, that is, alms of a trifling amount, or rations of inferior food, ostentatiously distributed by the nomenclators of the patrons to the tumultuous crowd of clients assembled at the door of their sumptuous mansions.

In his capacity of freedman, Cecilius remained the client of his former owner, and he had had to earn the *sportule* by continual acts of cringing meanness—the usual price of these parsimonious liberalities. Such necessities cannot redeem the soul debased by slavery, and do not prepare man for the exercise of that dignity which he may need in certain circumstances of his life.

Cecilius, a freeman and a citizen, had remained a slave at heart. To satisfy his selfish instincts, this man would have sacrificed, if necessary, the dearest and most sacred objects of his affection; and to conquer the enjoyments of life, for which he thirsted, would not have stopped before an abject or guilty action.

The manner in which he had encouraged the hopes of Gurges, and the loans he had obtained from him through

the promise of his daughter's early consent, at a time when he was certain of her opposition to the match, have already induced the reader to form a poor opinion of his honesty.

Albeit, a somewhat extraordinary circumstance had brought a sudden and important improvement in the freedman' affairs. He had saved the life of the consul Afranius Dexter, by protecting him from the fury of one of his freedmen who attempted to murder him. The consul, in his gratitude gave his rescuer a wife, a dowry, and the lucrative office of scribe in Saturn's treasury.

Cecilia was born in the first year of this marriage, and her childhood had been much neglected. Her mother died while she was yet in her infancy, and her father, from his habits, his instincts and his character, was ill-suited for the task of devotion and tender solicitude, imposed by a young girl's education.

But the gods, as certain friends of the family ingenuously observed, had protected Cecilia. She was remarkable for her splendid beauty, and, what is better, for the charms of her intellect, her candor, and those gifts which distinguish superior natures. With exquisite good sense and rare wisdom, she had promptly understood the necessities of the solitary life to which fate had condemned her, and she had provided for them without asking of her father efforts and sacrifices of which she knew him incapable.

Thus, she had availed herself of every opportunity of acquiring instruction, and her education, due only to her own unaided efforts and perseverance, was so complete for a girl of her humble condition, as to cause astonishment.

To her care were due the comfort of her father's modest household, and the little enjoyments which Cecilius, ever miserly when useful expenses were concerned, and foolishly prodigal when he sought to gratify his desires, would have never tasted but for the tender solicitude of the amiable child.

Cecilia's poetical soul found great charm in the graceful fictions of mythology, and she took pleasure in participating in the ceremonies of certain feasts, and in mingling her pure voice with those of the young girls who, clad in white tunics and crowned with flowers, sang sacred hymns in the processions. But she could not understand the shameless indecency

of those other ceremonies where all restraint was lost, and the gods were honored by the most licentious revels.

On such occasions she would remain at home, thoughtful and dissatisfied; struggling between the long cherished superstitions of paganism, and the vague presentiment of a more perfect creed.

When her father left the treasury to fill the post of collector of the tax on Jews, and moved into the house rented from Tongilianus, the undertaker of funerals, in the neighborhood of Venus-Libitina's temple, the quiet happiness in which she had lived was disturbed.

The exigencies of the fiscal office filled by her father were to her a source of constant regret. She mourned over the fate of those poor families pitilessly prosecuted for the least delay in the payment of the tax; and although they were Jews—a despised, odious people—she could be met frequently visiting the wretched cabins scattered about the Libitina woods and the vicinity of the Capena gate, to assist the women, children and old men who had been the victims of Cecilius' fiscal rapacity.

"Why did my father accept an office which compels him to make other people unhappy?" she thought, with bitterness; and she tried to persuade him to resign, or, at least to deal more gently with the delinquent tax-payers; but, notwithstanding her great influence over Cecilius, the latter, who could not understand that any one should feel an interest in such beggars, was little inclined to give up a salary which was his only means of support, or to stay proceedings out of mere compassion.

The vespillo's attentions became a new source of sorrow for Cecilia. Not that she was unwilling to change a condition the duties of which were burthensome. Often, in her girlish dreams, she had thought of some loved companion, whose life she would embellish with her tender care; more than once she had prayed to her favorite divinities for that unknown being, whom she artlessly hoped to see appear suddenly before her.

But the much desired apparition was anything but charming under the coarse features and the mourning toga of our friend Gurges. Cecilia, at first, had not taken the slightest notice of the enamored vespillo; and when he had grown

bold enough to avow his love, her delicate and refined nature revolted at the very thought of a marriage which she deemed impossible.

An incident occurred, meanwhile, which, changing her whole life, filled her heart, and gave a new direction to the vague thoughts that had so often disturbed her peace of mind.

In one of her rambles in the Jewish quarter, she had met a poor old woman, bed-ridden by disease, and wanting the most common necessaries of life. The kind young girl was deeply moved; and, obeying the generous impulses of her heart, she had become a devoted nurse to the old Jewess, bringing her medicine and food, and ministering daily to her wants.

One evening, she was seated by the sick woman's bed-side, holding her withered hand in hers, and talking hopefully of the improvement she had found in her condition, when a voice, trembling with emotion, uttered these words close to her ear:

"May Heaven bless you, O gentle maiden, who have taken care of my mother and have relieved her whilst her son was away!"

The young girl turned her head. A young man wearing the *sagum* or military cloak, with the breast-plate, the buckler and shining helmet, was bending over her.

Cecilia started, and could not restrain a cry. She averted her eyes, and stood, blushing, and trying to collect her thoughts. She could not realize the import of the stranger's words.

The old woman had risen from her bed, and clasped the young man in her arms:

"It is my son," she cried, "my son who has been returned to me! Oh! yes, dear Olinthus, well may you bless this young girl, for, but for her kindness you should not have found your mother alive!"

Suddenly, the sound of grave voices united in a pious chant, filled the room. These voices coming from under ground seemed to ascend to heaven.

Olinthus remained thoughtful. A struggle was taking place within him. Turning at last to Cecilia:

"Come," he said; "the holy mysteries have begun,

and you are worthy of entering in the assembly of the faithful. Mother, I will soon return. I am going to ask God to repay our debt of gratitude to this young girl."

Cecilia was astonished, but she felt that far from having anything to fear, she could have full confidence in the young soldier. She put her little hand in his, and followed him.

After walking some distance in the dark, they came to the head of a subterranean flight of steps.

"Take care," said Olinthus to the young girl; "my brethren are there; you will be directly in their midst. Fear nothing."

Cecilia descended until, at the bottom of the steps, her eyes were suddenly dazzled by a bright light.

She had reached the sacred precinct. It was the crypt of the ancient temple of the Muses, which the Christians had discovered, and in which they assembled to praise God, to listen to the instructions of the pontiffs and to celebrate the holy sacrifices.

By the light of the lamps which hung from the ceiling, Cecilia saw a numerous crowd, kneeling, and singing the hymns she had heard from above.

To the left were the women: Olinthus led Cecilia among them and crossed over to the right where the men were praying.

The women gave Cecilia the kiss of peace, and made room for her.

At the further end of the crypt, on a little higher ground, was a table around which stood the pontiffs clad in flowing white garments. Upon the table was a cross, a few candles made of the purest wax, small loaves of bread, and vases containing wine.

The songs ceased, and a deep silence reigned. A venerable old man stepped forward, near the table, and beckoned to the others to sit down. He wore a white garment like the other pontiffs, but with some mark of distinction to show that he was the first among them.

The old man commenced by inviting the people to elevate their minds towards God, and when the crowd had replied "Amen," he said:

"My brethren, we have received a letter from John, the

only one of Christ's apostles who still lives. He advises us that he will soon be among us."

A suppressed exclamation from all these men and women showed with what joy this news was received.

"My brethren," resumed the old man, "the beloved disciple, in his letter, sends you but one recommendation: Charity in Jesus Christ, the love of justice. *Love ye one another*, have together but one heart and one soul, and you will fulfil the law. Such are the words by which, in ending his letter, he confirms you in the faith of the Word of Life. Yes, my brethren, love ye one another in poverty, in misfortune, in suffering; let each of you sustain the weak, comfort the afflicted, relieve the poor, and he shall live! And now," added the venerable speaker, "let the new catechumens be brought forward.

Four persons, a man, a woman and two youths were brought forward and conducted to the priest. It could be easily seen that the four belonged to the same family.

"Flavius Clemens," said the old man, addressing he who appeared the chief of this family; "one of our sisters in Jesus Christ, your aunt Flavia Domitilla, has informed us that you wished to be received in the grace and faith of the true God, together with your wife and your two sons. Do you, do they persist in this resolution?"

"Yes, Anacletus," replied Flavius Clemens; and those who were with him, repeated: "We persist!"

"Flavius, you are great before the world and, with your wife, the nearest relative of the Emperor. Your two sons are Cæsars, that is, destined to rule the universe. This greatness, these lofty hopes, you may have to sacrifice them to your new faith. Will you do it and will these children do it?"

"We will!" cried the four neophytes with one voice.

"Will you give up even your lives?" again asked the pontiff.

"Even our lives!" they responded, with holy enthusiasm.

Anacletus made the sign of the cross on the forehead of the neophytes, and went through the ceremony of the imposition of hands, to receive them as catechumens. He then informed them that before they could be admitted to the baptism of the faithful, they must be instructed in all the

mysteries and live in the strict practice of all the precepts of the religion of Christ.

Then, addressing the people: "My brethren," said the pontiff, "recollect yourselves! now is the time of the holy communion! we are going to break the bread of life and to drink the chalice of salvation."

All the Christians prostrated themselves, touching the ground with their foreheads.

The priest raised his hands; he then elevated the vases containing the wine, and pronounced certain words, in a low voice which did not reach Cecilia's ears.

Then, those who surrounded the pontiff, that is the deacons, went amidst the faithful who received from their hands fragments of the consecrated bread, and drank from the same chalices.

After this distribution, they gave each other the kiss of peace, and remained plunged in religious ecstasy.

No sound was heard except the whispering of prayers and the smothered sighs which accompany tears of emotion.

Cecilia could not understand what she saw; she felt, however, that an important religious act was being accomplished.

A deacon offered her some of the bread and wine of which all the women around her had partaken. She declined, for she felt that she was not worthy of touching the sacred food, or of wetting her lips in the blessed cup.

The deacon, surprised at her refusal, inquired whether she was not one of the faithful.

She replied that she was the daughter of Cecilius.

A subdued rumor among those who heard the answer, expressed the surprise it caused. No one could understand how she had penetrated into the assembly of the saints.

The deacon hastened to inform the pontiff, who raised his voice to ask if any one had infringed the rules of the mysteries by bringing this heathen to witness them.

Olinthus came forward.

"This young girl," he said, "is the same who, for some time past, has been visiting our poor homes, to relieve our brethren's sorrows and to dry their tears. To her, my mother—poor, old Eutychia—owes her life; and when, but a while ago, I found her near my mother's bedside,

it seemed to me that God inspired me to lead her to Him. She is already our sister by her charity; and I feel confident that she will soon be so by her faith."

"You have done right, Olinthus, and I absolve you," said the pontiff. "This maiden is not unknown to us; we have heard of her kindness to our brethren. In the name of Christ, we bless her!"

An aged woman then approached Cecilia.

"Child," she said, "you are worthy of knowing the God we serve; He visited you, when He gave you compassion and love for those who suffer. Come with me, I shall teach you His law."

The language of this venerable women was gentle and caressing; her words went to Cecilia's heart.

The mysteries being over, the crowd retired slowly, and Cecilia followed the poor woman, who held her affectionately by the hand. The amiable girl felt as if she were dreaming; she could not fathom the meaning of all she had heard and seen. But her heart was deeply moved, and ineffable thoughts filled her mind.

She seemed to recognize those words of peace, union and love to which she had listened—her truth-seeking soul had lisped them long ago; those sacred songs had for her a meaning; she understood those men and women, now silent and collected, then uniting their voices in prayer: they honored divinity better than all those she had seen daily in the ceremonies of her pagan creed, and in the temples of Rome.

Then, that consular citizen, that illustrious matron, those two young men, proclaimed Cæsars—all those worldly honors despised, and death preferred to life—had filled her soul with admiration and astonishment.

They had reached another part of the crypt and a new spectacle offered itself to Cecilia's eyes.

"Take a seat by me, my dear child," said her aged companion.

Two long tables, placed parallelly, ran nearly the whole length of the subterranean room. They were covered with the simplest articles of food: bread, eggs, milk, a few dishes of meat, and fruit.

The men went to one of the tables, over which the pontiff

who had celebrated the mysteries, presided, seated on a stool a little higher than the rest.

The old Jewess who accompanied Cecilia, took a similar seat of honor at the head of the women's table.

The pontiff stood up and blessed the food; and all proceeded to eat. The conversation, carried on in a low voice, became general and characterized by a friendly effusion mingled with reserve.

"These are our agapæ or feasts of charity," remarked the old woman to Cecilia; "we have them always after the holy mysteries, in order to tighten the bonds that unite us, and to remind us that permitted pleasures, or necessary pain, all must be in common between us."

Cecilia noticed that this old woman who spoke to her with the tenderness of a mother, was the recipient of great marks of respect from all those present. Even the pontiff had bowed low when she passed near him.

It was, also, with no little astonishment that she saw Flavius Clemens and his two sons waiting humbly on the men, whilst his wife and another matron, whose appearance indicated her high rank, filled the same office at the women's table. She remembered the Saturnalia, where the masters became the servants of their slaves, and the Matronalia during which the Roman ladies abdicated temporarily their pride to become dependent on their inferiors; but she had never heard that the consuls and their wives, and the heirs to the empire had ever submitted to such trials.

The old Jewess seemed to read her young companion's thoughts:

"My dear child," she said, "among us the greatest must yield to the smallest. Our God humbles the mighty and exalts the weak. It is because I am the weakest and poorest of all that they do me honor. They also respect in me the daughter of the apostle whom Christ made the corner-stone of His Church. I am Petronilla, the daughter of Peter, the Chief of the Apostles, who was chosen because he was only an humble fisherman. Some day you will understand all these things, my child. Remember my name, and whenever you feel the wish, come to me, for I love you."

"And now," she added, "I shall put you under the care of this matron, who will take you to your father's house, for it is late and we are going to separate."

What was Cecilia's astonishment, when Petronilla beckoned to Flavia Domitilla, and placed her, the humble plebeian girl, under the care of the Emperor's cousin.

She left the crypt with Flavius Clemens, the two young Cæsars, and that other matron whose imposing mien had struck her.

At a hundred paces from the entrance to the cave, litters were in waiting. The torches of the runners lighted the darkness of Libitina's woods; and the slaves hastened to execute the orders of their masters.

Here, all the apparel of power; all the splendors of wealth! And, but an instant ago, poverty, abasement, equality with the humblest! Well might the bashful and artless girl believe herself fascinated by a dream!

"Young maiden, come with me into this litter," said the unknown matron.

And, as Cecilia hesitated, scarcely believing that this invitation could be intended for her, the matron added:

"What, my child, are you so proud that you refuse Flavia Domitilla?"

"Are you, then, also a relation of the Emperor?" the young girl asked, with lively curiosity.

"Yes, dear child," replied Flavia, smiling at her eagerness. Come, get in, we shall soon make each other's acquaintance."

Cecilia obeyed. The cortege moved, and was not long reaching her father's residence. Cecilius was very uneasy, not knowing what had become of his daughter. But when he saw her return in such illustrious company, and when Flavius Clemens had spoken a few words to him, he was so delighted, that he thanked all the gods he knew by name, and forgot to question his daughter as to the cause of her delay. With the protection of these great people, his fortune was assured!

Sleep did not visit Cecilia's eyes during that night. What she had witnessed and heard on that eventful evening, filled and confused her mind.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN ESPOUSALS.

CECILIA on the following days returned frequently to see Petronilla, the holy woman, whom she soon learned to love dearly, and to whose teachings, lavished with inexhaustible solicitude, she listened with increasing interest.

She also often saw Eutychia, who called her daughter, and Olinthus who gave her the sweet name of sister; and had long conversations with them. They continued Petronilla's work by teaching her the religion of Christ, and fortifying her in her nascent faith.

With such teachers and under the influence of such examples, the pure-minded girl could not be long in renouncing the lying fictions which she already secretly despised, and which she now rejected with horror. In a few months she became truly a Christian in heart, aspiring only to the grace of baptism, and rapt in joys as sweet as they were new to her.

"What a blessing!" she would exclaim; "that I should at last see the truth, I who have been so long without knowing it, and who yet sought it with all my soul!"

She had become the darling child of this whole poor tribe of exiles; all knew her and surrounded her with marks of the liveliest affection.

It seemed as though these poor people vied in repaying in love for the daughter, the miseries and sorrows caused by the father. For, Cecilius who was not aware of the tie existing between his daughter and the Jews, was as pitilessly exacting as ever, and continued to spread desolation and ruin in the poor colony.

Cecilia was deeply moved by the tenderness with which all greeted her. If she understood that Christianity dictated this pardon and forgetting of injuries caused by her family, she felt still more the power of that charity which inspired love by way of retaliation. She saw that this virtue, completely unknown to those with whom she had lived hitherto, was the life-giving principle of the little society into which chance, or rather divine Providence had suddenly thrown her.

As Petronilla had told her on the occasion of the agapæ, joys and sorrows were in common between these Christians so truly united, so thoroughly imbued with brotherly love. Whatever one of them possessed was the property of all; and however small and insignificant the offering, it was received with gratitude, and the blessing of God was invoked on the giver. These men and women cared not for riches or for the comforts they bring, but despised and rejected them.

Cecilia, the humble girl, soon became the intimate guest of the noble Flavius family. Flavia Domitilla had distinguished her, and had asked Petronilla to confide her to her care. The venerable daughter of the Apostle, had the more willingly consented as Cecilia would find in Flavia Domitilla's house, the example of the greatest virtues and the best school in which she could study a perfect Christian life.

This illustrious matron whom the Church counts among the most sainted virgins who lived in those early ages, was then leading in Rome, and not far from the Imperial palace, a life of admirable charity and self-sacrifice.

Her mother, whose name has not been preserved in history, was a sister of Clemens, She was nearly related to the Emperor Domitian, for she was the grand-daughter of Sabinus Major, Vespasian's elder brother.

This Sabinus Major was the first who illustrated the Flavia race—whose founder, according to Suetonius, was an obscure undertaker of public works. He was Prefect of the city when he was killed during a riot incited by the Vitellius party. Tacitus who relates his death says that he had commanded the armies of Rome during thirty-five years, under the Emperors Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero.

The infuriated mob set fire to the Capitol where Sabinus and his family had sought an asylum, and massacred them. One child only escaped from this butchery. This was Flavia Domitilla, who owed her life to the courage and devotion of two Christian slaves, Nereus and Achilæus—who both suffered martyrdom, subsequently, with their mistress.

Flavia Domitilla, placed by these men in a Christian family, lived with them several years, and embraced their faith. When more propitious times came, she was sought and claimed by her uncle, the consul Flavius Clemens, and went to live with him. She became the chosen instrument of

Providence through which this noble family embraced the true faith.

The large estates of her family having been restored to her, she devoted her abundant means to relieving the poor and consoling the unfortunate. She gave the example of all the Christian works performed in the midst of wealth and worldly greatness with that humble spirit and sublime devotion, which have found imitatresses, even in our days, among women of the highest rank.

Cecilia conducted by Petronilla, went every day to Flavia Domitilla's house, where she associated herself to the practice of virtues which she had never before suspected. She brought to this pious task the enthusiasm of a neophyte who found in her own heart the liveliest sympathy for those who suffer.

Gurges who, for some time past, had commenced persecuting the young girl with his love, and who felt a certain uneasiness at her frequent absence from home, was far from suspecting how she employed her time. It will be easily understood why Cecilia had little time to think of the vespillo, and why she had not hastened to give the favorable answer to his suit, with the hope of which her father had so long lured Gurges.

Moreover—shall we say it? another thought was gradually absorbing the maiden's mind; a new feeling had grown side by side with her new faith—foreign to it and yet arising from it. This feeling caused her much anxiety, for she feared that it was distracting her thoughts from God.

The poor child loved Olinthus. For several days she had avoided meeting him, hoping thus to recover her peace of mind; but absence seemed only to increase the feeling which filled her heart and mastered her will.

The motherless girl resolved to consult her two benefactresses, Petronilla who loved her as her child, and Flavia Domitilla who treated her like a sister. She knelt, one day, before these two holy women, and having, artlessly, and amidst many tears, unveiled the troubled state of her heart, asked them if she was still worthy of being a Christian.

Petronilla and Flavia Domitilla, those two virgins so pure both, and yet so different—the one still bright with the bloom of youth, the other with the snow-white locks of venerable old age—looked at each other with a sweet smile.

"Child," said Petronilla, in a tone of gentle authority;

"do you place Olinthus before God, in your thoughts, or God before Olinthus?"

"I do not know," faltered the young girl; "the faith of God is dear to me, but at the same time, Olinthus' image is always in my heart."

"And if you were given the alternative to renounce your faith in order to follow Olinthus, or to give him up for God, what would you do, my daughter?" Petronilla asked, with still more authority.

"Even if the sacrifice should kill me, O mother, I feel that nothing would ever make me renounce Jesus Christ!"

"Child, your love is permitted, for it is pure and innocent. Let peace descend into your young heart. With us, marriage is holy, and we had already thought of it for our Cecilia."

"Can it be true, Petronilla? What, Olinthus. . . "

"Olinthus loves you, and Eutychia wants you to be her daughter. We shall arrange this matter."

"But, what will my father say? How can I hope that he will consent?"

"Do you think," said Flavia Domitilla, "that if I undertake to gain his consent, Cecilius will resist long?"

"Child," said Petronilla, "see how gentle and easy to bear is the yoke of the God we have taught you to serve! He has His virgins, loved flowers, born of His breath, but near these, in His love, there is a place for the young spouse, for whom He reserves the same glorious palms, if she walks in the innocence and purity of His faith. Rise, my daughter, and hope in His infinite goodness!"

Cecilia was radiant. Her tears had ceased to flow, and her heart opened itself with delight to the promised happiness which she could now enjoy without remorse. There could be no great obstacle to her marriage. Why should Cecilius refuse his consent? He had accepted Gurges; Olinthus was certainly preferable to the vespillo. Olinthus had an important grade in the Roman army. He was a *primipilaris*, and had recently distinguished himself in the war against the Dacians.

He had saved a legion from an ambush where it would have been cut to pieces. Severely wounded in this encounter, he had not been able to continue the campaign with Domitian, and had obtained a furlough. He had just returned to Rome

when he met Cecilia at his mother's bedside. He could not see this beautiful girl, so gentle, and so devoted to Eutychia, without being drawn to her by the most tender affection. This feeling had taken a deeper root in his heart when he had seen Cecilia receiving instruction from Petronilla and embracing his faith with so much ardor.

Cecilia having become a Christian, could be his companion for life, and Olinthus blessed God for the treasures of grace, virtue and candor with which He had endowed the gentle maiden. He had confided to Petronilla his projects and his hopes, and implored her to undertake their realization.

Petronilla, assisted by Flavia Domitilla, was preparing to smooth down the obstacles which might be in the way of these young people. Flavia intended to give Cecilia a dower that would secure them the modest comforts of a happy home. She proposed also to overcome the possible repugnance of Cecilius, by the offer of a sum of money that would make him independent of his collectorship. There was little doubt of his acquiescing on those conditions.

The two holy women considered the happiness of these children as secured.

In the early times of the Church, marriage was always preceded by the ceremony of the espousals. This was done in a very simple manner: the future consorts having obtained the authorization of the Bishop, exchanged a solemn promise in presence of some holy and venerable persons.

Petronilla received the mutual promise of the two lovers. Taking Cecilia's hand, she placed it in Olinthus', and told them:

"You are betrothed: love you each other in Jesus Christ, and wait patiently, in retreat and silence, the day when He will be pleased to bless your union."

According to the custom of those days, Olinthus placed on Cecilia's finger a ring, the pledge of his promise, upon which was engraved a symbolic sign—a dove, image of the purity of her who was to be his companion.

The marriage was to take place after a brief delay. Flavia Domitilla must first obtain the consent of Cecilius. It was necessary, besides, that Cecilia should prepare to be baptized, for the pontiff could not bless her marriage until she would have become, through this first sacrament, the child of the true God.

The news of the contemplated marriage caused a general rejoicing among the poor Jews to whom Cecilia was so dear. It was like a family festival promised to those hearts which thrilled with the same joys—like a light from Heaven, piercing the dark cloud that hung over their heads.

But these dreams of happiness were soon to vanish. Gurges, the unfortunate vespillo, discovered, in the manner we have related, that the young girl was a Jewess and preferred a Jew to him.

Cecilius learned that his daughter was a Christian.

Marcus Regulus, concealed in Eutrapeles' shop, overheard the barber's conversation with Gurges.

And, finally, Cecilia, instead of marrying Olinthus, was sold in a slave market.

How did all this happen?

Was Olinthus, whom we have seen boiling with rage at the foot of the platform on which stood his weeping betrothed, doomed to lose her on earth, to find her only in eternity?

Or would God, in His justice, give him back the innocent maiden who had invoked his name, and for whose deliverance two sublime virgins implored Him: Petronilla, the daughter of Peter, the prince of the apostles, and Flavia Domitilla, the angel of virtue and love, who laid at His feet the worldly treasures of human greatness and wealth?

CHAPTER IV.

PARMENON'S REGISTER.

ON the morning following the nocturnal conversation between Eutrapeles and Gurges and the short consultation which had afterwards taken place between the former and Marcus Regulus, a stranger presented himself in the barber-shop soon after it had been opened.

This stranger was no other than Parmenon, the slave-trader; but he no longer wore the gaudy toga we have seen him wearing whilst attending his calling; his dark-colored

tunic was almost concealed under the folds of a wide *pallium* or mantle.

"I am sent," said Parmenon to the tonsor whom he found alone in the shop, "by the lord Marcus Regulus, for the business you know of."

"Ah very well," said Eutrapeles; "I see that the lord Marcus Regulus loses no time. You are welcome."

"Here," resumed Parmenon, "are the ten thousand sestertii which it has been agreed to pay Gurges, and here is the register which will prove the transfer to me of that amount."

Parmenon unrolled the connected leaves of a roll of papyrus of a common kind, and proceeded to explain the writing to the barber.

"You see," said he, "here is the *acceptum* on this side, and the *expensum* on that, which is sufficient to show that I have paid in order to receive. The vespillo must sign at the bottom of these two columns during the day."

"Gurges cannot come before night," remarked Eutrapeles.

"Very well," said Parmenon, "I shall call for my register at the hour you generally see the lord Marcus Regulus. He will not come to-night. See that the register be properly signed."

And Parmenon went out after nodding to Eutrapeles in a rather discourteous manner.

"I don't like this fellow," mused the tonsor. "He looks like a real *parricide's sack!* * . . . After all Regulus has his own reasons for employing him; it is none of my business."

At the hour appointed, Parmenon called for his register. He found it duly signed by Gurges.

The vespillo had readily consented to the transfer by which he got back the ten thousand sestertii he had considered lost. He could not understand, however, why any one should exchange those pretty gold pieces for a claim against an insolvent debtor like Cecilius.

On the following day, Parmenon, still wearing his dark

*The sack in which parricide's were drowned contained a dog, a cock, a viper and a monkey. The proverbial designation "Parricide's sack" was used to designate the assemblage, in one person, of all kinds of wickedness

tunic and his *pallium*, and carrying his register under his arm, could be seen awaiting the opening of the court of Publius Aufidius Namusa, one of the seventeen pretors who administered justice in Rome.

When this magistrate had taken his seat, and his crier (accensus) had asked aloud whether any citizen had a case for trial, Parmenon unrolled his register before the pretor, and requested him to see that his claim against Cecilius was legal, certain and demandable.

Aufidius Namusa ordered an action to be entered against the fiscal agent, and Parmenon went away rejoicing. During the day, an *executor litium* or *viator*, that is to say a constable, called on Cecilius.

"I summon you in Parmenon's name; follow me to the court," said the *viator*, putting a written citation in the hands of the astonished Cecilius.

"I do not know this Parmenon, and I owe him nothing;" remarked Cecilius.

"This, the Pretor Publius Aufidius Namusa will decide;" replied the *Viator*. "If you should refuse, I would touch this witness' ear, "he added, pointing to a man who had accompanied him; "and I would take you by the neck, in conformity with the law of the Twelve-Tables. However, you have until to-morrow to make up your mind, for this is an uncertain day (*Intercisus dies.*)

Cecilius after due reflection, came to the conclusion that he could not do otherwise than appear before the pretor. He there found Parmenon, who had taken care not to forget his register.

The pretor requested Parmenon to swear, according to the provisions of the law, that in bringing this suit he had not been actuated by a feeling of chicanery or revenge, and that he did not claim more than was due to him.

Parmenon hastened to take the required oath.

Aufidius Namusa then told him to state his claim and to show Cecilius his register. These two formalities having been complied with, the pretor invited Cecilius to declare whether he acknowledged the debt, or if he denied it, to state upon what grounds.

Cecilius admitted that he owed ten thousand sestertii to Gurges; but remarked that he could not understand why

Gurges should have transferred his claim to Parmenon, unless it were through motives of revenge because Cecilia had refused to marry him.

This argument had little weight in law; "*Dico*," said the pretor, which was affirming Parmenon's right. "Consequently," he continued, "I adjudge the body of Cecilius to the said Parmenon."

And he ordered the crier to call the next case.

"I don't understand," faltered Cecilius, rolling his ear between his fingers—a way embarrassed people have had from times immemorial.

"You don't understand!" quote Parmenon brutally as he retired. "It means that if by to-morrow you have not paid me ten thousand sestertii, I shall put my hand on your tunic, and you will belong to me!"

Cecilius began to comprehend, but ten thousand sestertii are no small sum for a poor man to find, and the wretched tax-gatherer saw no issue to his dilemma.

"This Parmenon has gained his suit very easily," remarked a stranger who had followed the case with interest, and who was walking by the side of Cecilius. "Marcus Regulus shrugged his shoulders when he heard the judgment."

Cecilius heard the remark and conceived a hope!

"Who is this Marcus Regulus, and what did he say?" asked the unfortunate suitor, approaching the stranger.

"Marcus Regulus is the first lawyer of Rome," replied the latter; "and he was saying that he would have compelled this Parmenon to carry away his register without obtaining anything."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Cecilius; "Marcus Regulus said this! Is he still in the Forum?"

"Yes, there he is, amidst that group of pleaders." I would advise you to speak to him; he will give you some means of escaping from Parmenon's clutches;" said the stranger, pointing out the lawyer who, on his side, had lost nothing of this by-play unnoticed by others.

Cecilius went straight up to Marcus Regulus, to whom he explained his case in a few words, asking him whether there was any means of obtaining a reversion of judgment.

"We shall see about it," replied Marcus Regulus, "I think we may find some remedy. But, at present, as you

see, I am detained here by other engagements. Come to see me to-morrow morning, early; my house is beyond the Tiber."

Cecilius turned his steps homeward, feeling a little easier in mind. But the poor fellow had not seen the end of his troubles. When he arrived home he found a communication from the City Prefect, enjoining him to explain his suspected affiliation with the Jews or Christians of Capena Gate; then a summons from the Council of the Pontiffs, to answer an accusation of sacrilege based on the fact that the little god Jugatinus had been found lying broken on the public highway, in front of his house.

Could it be that some officious neighbor, having collected those mutilated fragments, had really carried them to the Pontiffs, and in his indignation, had brought this accusation against Cecilius? or did the blow come from a hand more directly interested in his ruin?

The unfortunate man did not even think of propounding to himself these questions, overcome as he was by the triple calamity with which he was threatened: to be in Parmenon's clutches, to lose his situation, and, what was still more serious, to be accused of sacrilege before the Pontiffs' court!

"Cecilia!" he cried, in a voice of thunder; "come here, unworthy child!"

The young girl hastened to her father's presence. Since the scene witnessed by Gurges, she had not left the house. Her father had forbidden it. Cecilius had ascertained without difficulty that, as alleged, his daughter was a Christian, that she was about to marry a Jew, and that old Petronilla had been the cause of all this trouble. He was furious! Whatever religious convictions he had, revolted at the idea that his daughter had embraced the odious superstitions of those miserable Jews, the most despised of men; and he foresaw the misfortunes likely to happen to him, the agent of the law, and commissioned to enforce it in all its rigor towards a detested class, when it should be known that his own daughter had been initiated to their sacrilegious and impious creed.

He had therefore signified to his daughter that she must give up her new faith, or he would compel her even if he had to use the extraordinary power conferred by the law, to its

fullest extent. Meanwhile he placed her under the closest surveillance, to prevent any communication between her and those who, in his judgment, had caused her ruin.

When Cecilia came down she found her father in a state of terrible excitement.

"Wretched child," he cried, "here then are the fruits of your infamous conduct!"

And he showed her the writ in Parmenon's name, the citation to appear before the Pontiffs, and the Prefect's letter.

"So," he continued, "I am ruined, my freedom is in the hands of a wretch, my life is in danger, because my daughter has betrayed her father and her gods! . . . Come, Cecilia, have you reflected? For you must speak now! Will you renounce that abominable creed?"

"How, my dear father, could the sacrifice of my faith save you? would your misfortunes, if they exist, be remedied?"

"If they exist! Great Gods! Have I invented them?"

"No, father! but it is not you they threaten, it is me!"

"How is that?"

"The City Prefect will not displace you when you will have told him that your daughter alone is a Christian. The Pontiffs will not punish you, but me, when they learn that I broke the idol."

"And Parmenon?"

"Parmenon will have no power when his claim is satisfied."

"By Hercules! the girl has a charming, easy way of arranging things!" cried Cecilius with bitter irony. "Indeed, it is foolish in me to feel alarmed! Oh! how like the way of those perfidious Jews this is! They have a ready answer for the most difficult questions! Unfortunate child!" added the father, addressing his daughter with a certain tenderness, "can you not understand that all is lost if you persist in proclaiming yourself a Christian! and that all is saved if you will abjure at the feet of the Pontiffs!"

"Father," said Cecilia, in a firm and respectful tone; "do not expect that I shall ever renounce the religion of Christ. Better die, than "

"What! you would persist in this infamous creed, at the

risk of destroying your own prospects, and, what you do not seem to care much about, at the risk of consummating your father's ruin, and perhaps of imperilling his liberty and his life!"

"It would be a dreadful thing, O my father! it would be for me a source of everlasting sorrow, if I should be the cause of your misfortune! but, I repeat it, you are unnecessarily alarmed, and "

"And?" asked Cecilius, trembling with fear and rage, "And? Proceed, unnatural child!"

"O father! take my life . . . it belongs to you . . . and I would be happy to lay it down for you . . . but do not ask of me a sacrifice which I cannot make."

Cecilius, pale with rage, was fearful to behold. He raised his hand as if to strike or curse his daughter! But a sudden thought made him withhold the blow.

"You are no longer my daughter!" he exclaimed vehemently; "no, by all the gods; I disown you! But I shall crush you, as I crush this vase which, like you, is mine!"

And seizing an amphora upon the table he dashed it on the floor.

"Father! Father!" said Cecilia imploringly.

"What is it you wish to say? that you repent? that you renounce this cursed superstition?" asked Cecilius looking at her with a madman's gaze.

"Never!" said the young girl, making a supreme effort; and, overcome by her emotion, she fell, sobbing bitterly, on a seat.

Her father cast on her a glance full of sadness and bitter sorrow, and left her without speaking another word; but as he went out, he muttered to himself:

"This consultation with Marcus Regulus is more necessary than ever."

CHAPTER V.

A LEGAL CONSULTATION.

MARCUS-ATILIUS Regulus possessed more wealth than many illustrious patricians. In his youth, he once offered a sacrifice to the gods, for the purpose of learning whether he would ever possess sixty millions sestertii; and he often related, himself, how, on that occasion, the entrails of the victims happening to be double, he had understood this omen to mean that this immense sum was twice promised to him.

He had, in fact, accumulated this incredible amount, but by the most abject and infamous means. His career may be divided into three distinct periods.

During the first, which extends from Nero's reign to those of Vespasian and Titus, he served his apprenticeship in those crimes which subsequently won him such unenviable fame.

His father, banished by Claudius or by Nero, having left him no patrimony, he had felt at an early age the thirst for blood and the insatiable craving for gold—*Libidiue sanguinis et hiatu præmiorum*, says Tacitus with inimitable force of style—and he had inaugurated his entrance into the bar, by becoming instrumental in three odious murders perpetrated by Nero upon his accusations.

These murders were those of Marcus Licinius Crassus, great-grand-son of the famous orator, who was also one of the wealthiest citizens of Rome during the last years of the republic; and of Camerinus and Salvidienus Orphitus about whose rank and quality little is said by the historians.

The accusation against Crassus brought to Regulus seven millions sestertii: those against Camerinus and Salvidienus Orphitus were paid with the questorship and the sacerdotal dignity.

During the second period, which comprises the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, informers were looked upon with disfavor. Regulus endeavored to retain his seat in the Senate, but was crushed under the burning words of

Curtius Montanus, and ignominiously expelled from that illustrious body.

He returned to the bar where shone such men as Satrius Rufus, Pompeius Saturninus, Suetonius the author of the life of the *Twelve Cæsars*, Salvius Liberalis, Cornelius Tacitus, the great historian, Caius Fronto, Tuscilius Nominatus, Claudius Restitutus, and Pliny-the-Younger, the greatest orator among them.

We need not say that Regulus was despised by his colleagues.

During the third period—Domitian's reign—Marcus Regulus resumed his trade of informer and spy. It was not, however, by acting openly as he had done in former times, but by secret denunciations and dark undertakings that he endeavored to win Domitian's favor.

He vied in infamous zeal with Metius Carus, a vile informer, but less dangerous than Regulus, and who could scarcely brook the latter's competition.

Herennius Senecionus having been condemned and put to death through the accusations of Metius Carus, simply because he had eulogized Helvidius Priscus, the son-in-law of Thraseas, and one of Nero's victims, Regulus, jealous of having had no share in so meritorious a denunciation, attempted to connect himself with it by pursuing with his insults the memory of Herennius.

But his rival could not bear this interference, and checked him in the midst of his facile triumph, with this terrible apostrophe: "What have you to do with my dead? Have you seen me torment Crassus and Camerinus?"

Marcus Regulus was certainly, as one of his victims wrote to Domitian: the most wicked of two-legged animals—*omnium bipedum nequissimus*. He was also the most skillful of plotters. We have already seen how he had woven a web around Flavius Clemens, the Grand-Vestal and Metellus Celer. He had found a most useful tool in the loquacious Eutrapeles, in whose shop he picked up, almost every night, some valuable information.

The conversation between Gurges and Eutrapeles, overheard by Regulus from his hiding place in the barber's *tepidarium*, had admirably served his purpose, for he had acquired the certainty that Flavia Domitilla was a Christian,

entertaining relations with the Jews of Capena Gate; and, at the same time, he had learned the name of the young girl through whom it would be easy—so he thought, at least—to penetrate the mysteries he was so anxious to discover.

But before all, he must have the girl in his power. If this might have seemed difficult to others, it was nothing for a tactician like Marcus Regulus. His plan was promptly conceived, and he made the most of every circumstance mentioned by the vespillo. He imagined, first, to bring forward Parmenon, in order that he might have a hold on Cecilius, who being without resources must fear for his liberty.

Then he completed his plan of campaign against the poor tax-gatherer by the Prefect's letter and the citation before the Pontiff's court, for, the reader must have surmised it, these documents found by Cicilius on his return home, had been sent at this arch-plotter's suggestion.

He it was who had sent the officious stranger to the Forum to lead the defeated pleader into the snare, by showing him Marcus Regulus as the only man who could save him from Parmenon.

Marcus Regulus now felt sure that Cecilius would come, and he was confidently expecting him, when his nomenclator introduced Cecilia's unhappy father in his exedra or consultation room.

A single window admitted the light in this vast room, around which were placed purple covered seats or beds for the visitors. The four angles were occupied by the brazen statues of Apollo, the god of eloquence and poetry; of Minerva, the goddess of science and wisdom; of Hercules, the emblem of strength; and of Cupids, the god of love and the symbol of literary grace.

Above the seats and running up as high as the hand could reach, could be seen a number of little balls, some gilded and the others simply made of wood, of bone, or of horn. These were the bosses or *umbilici* of the books placed in their *scrinia* or *foruli*, cylindrical cases, with round holes in the top into which the volumes, carefully rolled, were slipped.

Generally, these *scrinia* were placed on their end, around the room, but Regulus had adopted the system introduced by the booksellers in their shops, and which consisted in cutting small square compartments or pigeon-holes, in the

thickness of the wall, into which the *scrinia* were placed horizontally.

The number of books contained in these nests was quite considerable and had been collected at great cost; for Regulus aspired to the triple fame of the jurisconsult, the eloquent lawyer, and the writer; and the choice of his books corresponded with this ambition.

The table placed in the centre of the exedra was covered with briefs and documents, with wax tablets and styles for taking notes; with pergamins and immaculate sheets of papyrus for writing petitions and pleadings. There could also be seen the long calami which served as pens; the small cylindrical vases containing a gummy preparation for connecting together the papyrus sheets. The rollers or sticks were piled there, ready to receive the completed manuscripts and their umbilici.

When Cecilius entered the exedra, the lawyer seemed to be busily engaged in examining some manuscripts; but an oblique glance thrown on his visitor was sufficient to identify the latter. An imperceptible smile lighted his features.

"What is it? What do you want?" he asked, feigning at first not to recognize Cecilius; then, he resumed "Ah! very well; it is you who spoke to me yesterday, concerning one Parmenon . . . "

"Yes, sir," replied Cecilius; "but since yesterday, my position has undergone a strange complication."

"How is that?" asked the lawyer. "What new incident has occurred?"

Cecilius handed him the Prefect's letter and the citation of the Pontiffs.

Regulus feigned to read the two documents with the greatest attention.

"This is nothing," he remarked to Cecilius after a pause, and he crumpled the Prefect's letter; "I am particularly acquainted with Honoratus Messio, and with a word of explanation from me, the matter will be dropped. But this is much more serious," he added, putting his forefinger on the Pontiff's citation. "Is this charge true?"

"Unfortunately, it is," faltered Cecilius. "However, it was not I, but my daughter who broke the statue of the little god Jugatinus.

"Your daughter lives with you, and under your paternal authority?" asked the lawyer with peculiar emphasis.

"Of course she does," replied Cecilius.

"Then, it amounts to the same thing. It is the same as if you had committed the sacrilege yourself: *Qui vox tua tanquam filii, sicuti filii vox tanquam tua intelligitur*, say the jurisconsults in their figurative style."

"By Jupiter! Is it possible?" exclaimed tha poor man.

"Did you not understand the quotation? Well, let us put *manus* in the place of *vox*, and the meaning will be: *that thy hand is like the hand of thy son, and the hand of thy son like thine.* Is this clear?"

"And what is the penalty?" asked the wretched Cecilius, with evident anxiety!

But, Marcus Regulus, thinking probably that the time had not come to satisfy his client on this point, replied by putting this other question:

"And what was the motive for this sacrilege?"

"My daughter is a Christian!"

"Your daughter is a Christian?" exclaimed Regulus with well assumed astonishment. "Oh! this is serious! very serious! I understand now Honoratus Messio's letter . . . and I don't know if he can show himself as leniently disposed as I hoped. No, it is scarcely probable. Let us see, however," he resumed, "the case may not be so bad after all. If your daughter would renounce this infamous superstition, I am sure the Pontiffs could pronounce themselves satisfied. Have you tried to persuade her?"

"Alas! yes," replied the unhappy father dejectedly; "but I have not succeeded."

"You must try again, and by the most energetic means," suggested Regulus, who before proceeding further, wished to ascertain how far he could go.

Yet he knew that the Christians had never allowed themselves to be vanquished. In Nero's time he had been a witness to their contempt for life and the immovable intrepidity of their faith.

"By the gods! I will do it," said Cecilius, "may they grant me better success! . . . But this cannot be! It is useless to hope! . . . What," he added, looking anxiously at the lawyer, "is there no other means?"

"Oh! there are always means," said Regulus. "But there are some means which are too harsh for a father to use, however inevitable they may be," he added with deep commisseration.

"And what means are those?" inquired the wretched man, overcome by his anguish.

"There is the *noxal abandonment*," replied the lawyer, watching his client's features to see the effect of this suggestion. And perceiving that Cecilius did not seem to understand, he added:

"The law is not so unjust and absurd as to make the father necessarily responsible in his own person, for the misdeeds of his child. This severing of the legal tie, to which I have just alluded, is possible for the father who does not wish that his daughter's crime should be visited upon him. It is done by surrendering the child to those who have made the complaint."

Cecilius bounded on his seat.

"What!" he cried; "I would surrender my daughter to the Pontiffs? And what would they do with her?"

"What will you? It must be you or she, or rather both of you," retorted Regulus coolly, "*noxa caput sequitur*, unless the separation takes place."

"How can this be, and to what danger are we exposed?"

"You are not threatened with personal punishment; and yet it is pretty much the same thing," said Regulus.

"What punishment do you mean? What will amount to the same thing? In the name of the gods, explain your words, my lord Regulus," cried the wretched father, raising his hands in supplication.

"Listen to me, then," said the lawyer, "it is unfortunately but too simple. Formerly," he continued, putting great stress on his words, "when the religious feeling, so weak nowadays, was all powerful, your daughter would have inevitably incurred the *servitude of the penalty*, that is to say, would have been condemned to the beasts, or rather to the mines, for Jugatinus being an inferior god, the penalty of the second degree would have been applied. When the criminal is a woman, the condemnation *in metallum* may be commuted to perpetual slavery."

"Oh! gods!" faltered Cecilius astounded.

"I do not think," remarked the lawyer unconcernedly, "that things will be pushed so far. And yet, I would not affirm it, for the divine Domitian has undertaken to restore the creed. But he is absent, and thanks to this circumstance, the Pontiffs may not be so stringent. It is probable they may be satisfied with a heavy sum of money in reparation for the sacrilege, say twenty thousand *sestertii*, which you will be obliged to pay in your quality of her father, for, according to law, the prosecution must be against yourself—*tecum est actio*. But, at all events, your daughter shall have to renounce her superstition; else I cannot answer for the consequences."

"And if my daughter does not abjure her creed and I cannot pay the twenty thousand sestertii."

"If you cannot pay the twenty thousand sestertii" replied the lawyer positively, "the Pontiffs will enforce the sale of your body to recover the judgment. This is why I have just told you that it would amount to the same thing."

The unhappy Cecilius was horribly pale. He found nothing to refute in these rigorous consequences which he had not perceived at first, but which now appeared perfectly clear to him. Often, in his office of Fiscal Agent, he had exercised the same rigor towards unfortunate insolvents, and had caused them to be sold at auction. Why should the Pontiffs abstain from this uniform means of constraint which the Roman law placed in the hands of all creditors?

His trouble did not escape Regulus. The informer distilled with skilful cruelty the words which fell into Cecilius' heart like so many drops of melted lead!

"Happily," he resumed, "to all these causes of grave anxiety, there remains the remedy of the *noxal abandonment*."

And as Cecilius made again a gesture of unconquerable repugnance:

"How!" cried the tempter, "can you hesitate to give up a daughter who has not feared to expose you to such terrible misfortunes, by her sacrilegious act, and who abandons you to those dangers by her obstinate refusal to abjure her false creed!"

"And Parmenon?" remarked Cecilius, "Parmenon whom we have forgotten, but who will take possession of me! Even if I should surrender my daughter to the Pontiffs, would that save me from Parmenon?"

"Ah! that is true, there is this Parmenon! The judgment is legal and I do not see how to avoid this difficulty," replied Regulus.

"It is to-day," resumed Cecilius, "that Parmenon is to demand what I owed Gurges, and if I do not pay him —which must happen, for I have not one hundred sestertii— I must expect . . ."

"To be sold within the legal delay, beyond the Tiber," added Regulus. "This, in fact, is unavoidable, unless . ."

"Unless what?" asked Cecilius anxiously.

"Why, unless you should do with Parmenon what you can do with the Pontiffs."

"The noxal abandonment! always the noxal abandonment!" cried the wretch with bitter anguish.

"Not precisely," said the lawyer with undisturbed calmness. "The noxal abandonment can only take place when a misdemeanor has been established. But the law permits us to satisfy a creditor by surrendering that which belongs to us. Now, your daughter belongs to you; she is your thing, in law."

"So, it is the sale of my daughter to Parmenon which you counsel?" asked Cecilius dejectedly but with some indignation.

"I counsel nothing," replied Regulus. "You come here to consult me in your embarrassments and I suggest the only means by which you can get out of them. Do as you please, what concern of mine is it! The gods are witness that I have only sought to save you."

As he said these words, a young child ran into the room and sprang joyfully on his knees. It was his son.

The wretch caressed the child tenderly, and after playing a while with him kissed his fair young brow.

"On the head of this child," said he, addressing Cecilius, "I swear that what I have said has not been to deceive you, but was dictated by my desire to serve your interests!"

And putting down his little son, he led him by the hand to the door where a slave took charge of him.

This short episode had deeply moved Cecilius. He now saw Regulus under another light; his confidence was strengthened: he could not think that the man who had shown himself a loving father, and had sworn an oath on his child's head, could think of betraying an unfortunate client.

When Regulus returned he found Cecilius sobbing bitterly:

"All is lost!" muttered the poor man amidst his tears; "save me! my lord Regulus, save my daughter! In the name of the gods, protect us!"

"But," said Regulus, "your salvation is in your own hands. It will not be my fault if your daughter persists in accomplishing her ruin and your own. I hold out my hand to he who can take it. I let him drown who is too far from the shore, or who will not avail himself of my aid. The great Jupiter himself could not do more, I think."

Cecilius, absorbed in his despair, made no reply.

"Come," said the lawyer, wishing to strike the last blow, "this consultation has lasted already too long, it must come to an end. I shall recapitulate, listen attentively and you can decide afterwards. By Hercules! I did not get you into this plight. Listen."

Cecilia's father looked up through his tears.

"This Parmenon," resumed the lawyer, purposely giving his words a certain obscurity; "far from injuring you, becomes a supreme resource, for you have the means of satisfying him. This being done, the prosecution of the Pontiffs directed to you, falls upon him, the law is positive. It is then Parmenon who must pay this money, admitting that it should be claimed, for the Pontiffs learning that you have punished, will not renew against the master, the complaint made against the father. As to your place, I don't see if the matter is settled in this way, why they should discharge you. By this act of courage you will have shown that you are not friendly to the Jews of Capena Gate. This is all I can say to you, my dear client. Think over it. I must go to the Forum."

Regulus rose and snapped his fingers—the Roman way to summon a slave, in those days.

The nomenclator who had admitted Cecilius answered the summons.

"Show this citizen the way," said Regulus.

When the door of the exedra closed, and the lawyer found himself alone:

"The soil was very hard," said he, "but I have done like the rain, I have permeated it. And now, Parmenon can be brought forward. Will the wretch act at the precise moment, or spoil the play by his awkwardness?"

CHAPTER VI.

HOW IN ROME A FATHER COULD SELL HIS DAUGHTER.

WHEN Cecilius returned home, it was night. The unfortunate man could not have said where he had been since morning. He had wandered about, with sinking heart and absent mind, trying vainly to think how he could save himself from the terrible dilemma in which he was placed.

Cecilia sat working by the light of a lamp. Her features reflected the sadness and anxiety of her thoughts. The fearful scene of the previous day, the prolonged absence of her father who had never failed coming home for the evening meal, those complaints before the pretor, the town-prefect and the pontiffs, all these strange events filled her heart with gloomy forebodings.

Then, respecting her father's orders even when they were unjustly rigorous, she had abstained herself since several days from seeing the beings dearest to her heart: Petronilla, Flavia Domitilla, Eutychia, and Olinthus, Olinthus whose betrothed she was, whose ring she wore on her finger—the pledge of a happiness she still hoped for, her only comfort when prayer failed to soothe her troubled soul!

She expected with anxiety the coming of her father, and yet at every noise that seemed to indicate his return, she trembled, like the leaf before the approaching storm. When Cecilius appeared, his haggard looks and the disorder of his garments were enough to reveal to her that something serious had occurred. She felt that she would want strength to bear the new trials which she foresaw; and she raised her eyes to heaven in mute supplication.

"Father," she said after a pause, seeing that Cecilius remained silent, "will you not take some food? I have prepared the dishes you like, and have kept them quite warm by the fire."

Cecilius drew a seat without vouchsafing an answer, and helping himself to the food placed before him by his daughter, commenced eating with avidity.

Hunger and sorrow combined to overwhelm the wretched man. Thought was annihilated.

Gradually, as the warm food caused his system to revive, a healthier glow spread on his pale features, and his eyes brightened. Pushing from him the empty plate, he looked at his daughter; the old tenderness overflowed his heart, and leaning his head on the table, he wept silently.

There was something painful to behold in this great sorrow, those silent tears of a father in presence of his only child. Cecilia threw herself at his feet, calling him by the most endearing names; but he arose and pushed her back with a sort of terror.

This struggle was thrice renewed; the daughter endeavoring to soothe by her caresses, the growing excitement of the father who repulsed her.

A strange fire burned in the tax-gatherer's eyes, and his features wore a dark and sinister expression.

"Cecilia," he said at last, "what I have to tell you is grave! You have betrayed your father and you have ruined him! Child, have you reflected upon the fate you have prepared for me?"

And without waiting for her answer, he added, looking at her sternly:

"My daughter, you must declare to me that you abhor those miserable Jews! that you despise their creed, and that you are ready to return to our gods!"

"Oh! father, father!" cried the young girl, "this again? you then have not understood me?"

"That's it, you cannot. And I shall be sold into slavery! and they will sell you also! We shall both be the prey of the Pontiffs and of Parmenon?"

"Who has said that, father?"

"A great jurisconsult, a man of law whom I consulted this morning. It is certain!"

"It is impossible, for you at least. As for me, if God wishes it, I am ready to suffer everything."

"So you refuse. You have no pity for me, you consent to your own ruin!"

"Father, do not ask me that which cannot be. Oh! I love you and my heart is breaking. May the God I adore listen to my prayer and shield you from all harm! At that price I shall bear the greatest evils as a light burthen."

"My child," said Cecilius in a caressing voice, approach-

ing his daughter, "can you think that you are not dear to me and that your misfortune would not be mine? Oh! my daughter, I have suffered and I suffer much! I only ask one word of you, one single word. Say it; in the name of the gods I beseech you!"

"I cannot, father! Do not invoke the gods, they are nothing. If what you ask of me were possible, I would do it, believe me. Strong must be your daughter's conviction in her faith, that she should resist when you beseech her for your safety."

"My little Cecilia," said the wretched father, clasping his daughter's hands in his; "do you wish me to die? How could I live if you were not there? what joy would be left in my life? in this humble home? Dear hope of my old age, where will you be!"

The poor child felt her courage giving way before these loving entreaties and these tears.

"Oh! my God!" she prayed inwardly, "help me! I did not think this trial would be so painful!"

"Do you remember your mother?" Cecilius resumed: "your mother who left you to my care, a mere babe? If she were here, joining her prayers to mine, would you refuse her?"

"My mother was a worthy and courageous woman. She would understand me, and she would not ask me to break the solemn vow I have made in my heart."

"My daughter! . . . Believe in your heart if you wish; but for the Pontiffs, for those who seek me, and who will come, ah! say that you are not a Christian!"

"Never! father, never! The God I adore claims the secret devotion of the soul, but He wants also that the lips should proclaim Him even before those who know him not."

"Great Gods!" cried Cecilius, "I beseech this child for her life and she hears me not! I ask her to save her father, and her voice is mute!"

"Father! father! do not say that, for I can give my life for you!"

"Listen to me, child," said the unhappy man, raising his hands imploringly. "Listen. . . You know not what is that slavery which awaits you. But I know it. When you were born, your father had passed forty years in the

power of a master. May the gods save you from belonging to that man whose will is law—a master! O my child! my life! my own flesh and blood! You do not know that my poor body had become hardened by continual tortures, and that Nominatus Capella, to whom I had been sold, could find but one means of inflicting pain—by loading me with irons brought to an almost red heat!"

"Horror!" cried Cecilia.

"See, child, see here!" and the wretch laying bare his arms and legs, showed his daughter the deep scars left by this cruel punishment. "Well! I could live, because I had hope! because, by selling, day after day, half of my ration, I could accumulate a capital. I added thus hunger to my other sufferings, but in the distant future, I saw freedom! and it came at last!"

"Yes, it came," continued the old man, growing more excited under the influence of these reminiscences. "I paid for it, to the heir of Nominatus Capella, eight thousand sestertii, accumulated painfully during forty years privations! But I have not sufficient life left me to purchase freedom a second time if I lose it!" he cried with wild despair. "Oh! to die a slave! to die a slave! . . ."

The unhappy man ceased speaking, until his oppressed chest was relieved by convulsive sobs.

"Child," he resumed dejectedly: "You have never known the tortures of a slave: the rod which tears, the whip with its lead-pointed lash, the red-hot blades! Would you then face those fearful sufferings?"

"Father," said Cecilia, firmly; "I repeat it, with the help of God, I am ready to suffer everything for Him!—And for you, also," she added with a look of unspeakable tenderness. "What more can you ask of me?"

"But it is not you alone! Do you not understand me?" Cried Cecilius with sudden exasperation, "it is you and I! They have told me so, and I know it to be true! Well! I will not, no, I do not want to be a slave again! And I will not be! By all the gods! they shall not sell me!"

The old man's anger, softened for a moment by paternal affection, was breaking out more terrible. His excitement was fearful to behold! One would have thought that he saw a phantom advancing to load him with chains, and that he repulsed it with terror.

"No, father, you will not be a slave! no, you will not be sold," repeated the terrified young girl. "I cannot understand your fears. Who can have put such ideas into your mind?"

"Hush!" cried Cecilius, and fixing his burning gaze on his daughter, he asked in a husky voice: "Tell me, do you want us both to perish?"

Cecilia understood him. It was a last supreme appeal, and she must weigh the filial love which filled her heart and the piety which had so recently entered her soul: she must choose between her God and her father!

"No, father," she replied solemnly; "no, I do not wish us both to perish. I love life and liberty, if God wills that I should preserve these blessings. I want you also to live, and to live free."

"Then, renounce those Jews and their God!"

"I cannot do it, however fearful the consequences of my refusal!" said the young girl, with the same force and calmness, although she felt so faint that she leaned against the wall for support.

The old man looked at her with stupid wonder, and stepped back terrified, staggering like a drunken man.

"Oh!" he said with fearful bitterness; "I am nothing for that child! She wishes my ruin! Parmenon can come now, I have wherewith to pay him!"

"Here I am," said a voice.

Cecilius looked round and saw Parmenon. The infamous agent of Regulus had waited all day in the neighborhood. When Cecilius returned home, Parmenon followed him, unperceived, into the house, where, concealed behind the heavy curtain, he had seen and heard all that passed between the father and his daughter.

Cecilius showed no surprise, although he had not been aware of this man's presence in his house. Overwhelmed by his emotions, the wretched tax-gatherer felt nothing but terror and anger. When Parmenon approached him, he merely remarked, with fearful calmness:

"Very well! You come in good time. But wait a minute."

And going to his daughter, he said to her, with terrible earnestness:

"Cecilia, do you understand that I am going to sell you to this man, if you refuse to do, this very instant, what I have asked of you?"

"Father," replied the young girl; "I understand that I am alone concerned now, and that I save you. Do what you wish."

But in her heart, she added: "Oh! my God! if my father were to kill me, it seems to me he would be less guilty!"

"You hear her," said Cecilius to Parmenon, "she is a Christian and refuses to return to our gods. I give her to you. Will you take her?"

"One moment!" quote Parmenon, who had received his instructions. "Is it a sale you propose to make, or a payment? Do you transfer to me all your rights as a father, which would be irrevocable, or do you merely offer me a pledge as my debtor, which would be of weak and uncertain value?"

"I tell you," cried Cecilius completely beside himself, "that this girl has betrayed her father and her gods! I dragged myself at her feet, and she would not listen to my tearful prayer. I tell you she is no longer my child, and you can take her away. Do you hear me, Parmenon?"

"Come in, men," cried the latter.

Seven men, the necessary witnesses to give validity to the act of mancipation, came in at this summons. There was an *antestat* to certify to the agreement; a *libripens* whose duties we have already described, and five witnesses.

"You must repeat before these persons *that you mancipate your daughter to me*," said Parmenon to Cecilius.

The fatal instant had arrived. The wretched father shuddered; he cast one long look on his daughter, and said:

"Child! it is yet time: say a word, one word only, and it will not be you, but me, whom I will deliver to Parmenon."

"Father, I cannot. Be free! it is my duty to suffer for you."

A solemn pause followed, during which nothing was heard but the groans of the father and the smothered sobs of the daughter.

At last, Cecilius extended his hand towards the child whom he had but recently called "his life's hope," "his own flesh and blood," and in a husky and scarcely audible voice, pronounced the words of the legal form:

"Parmenon, I mancipate to you this girl, who is mine! . ."

"And I," said Parmenon quickly, as he grasped Cecilia's hand, "I say that this young girl is mine by the law of the Quirites, and that I have bought her with this copper coin and these scales."

And he went through the formalities which we have seen performed by the divine Aurelia.

In Rome a daughter was but *a thing*, a chattel, relatively to her father, and her mancipation required no more formalities than that of a slave or a tract of land.

"Here," said Parmenon, throwing his torn register to Cecilius, "you owe me nothing, now."

Cecilius was crouching in a corner of the room. He heard not; he saw nothing.

"And now, let us go," added Parmenon.

Cecilia rushed to her father, to clasp him in a last embrace, but the old man tore himself away violently, with horrible imprecations.

Parmenon and his escort withdrew, taking along Cecilia. When they had proceeded a few steps in the street, the young girl heard a fearful cry. She looked back, and in the gloom of the night, she saw two hands extended towards her; then the noise of a body falling heavily on the pavement, struck her ears.

She would have rushed back, but Parmenon seized her roughly by the arm:

"Holloa!" he exclaimed; "Do we wish to escape already? that would be charming. Come, walk along quietly."

They soon arrived at the slave-dealer's tavern, and the young girl, her tender limbs bruised by heavy chains, was thrown into the narrow *ergastulum* where thirty slaves slept, confusedly packed together.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SLAVE-DEALER AS A LAWYER.

THE events we have just described were the sequence of the conversation between Gurges and Eutrapeles. They had occurred within a very small number of days.

Meanwhile, Flavia-Domitilla, Petronilla, Eutychia and Olinthus, and all the poor Jews of Capena Gate who loved Cecilia and who were accustomed to see her every day, were very uneasy at her absence.

Olinthus, particularly, wondered at it, and suffered the most cruel anguish, for he could not help thinking that perhaps Cecilia had abandoned the faith so recently embraced, and it was this which kept her away from the society of the faithful. She would then be forever lost to him, for how could he ever take for his companion in life, one who would have deserted her God and trampled under foot vows so recently made.

Another circumstance served to aggravate these fears, or, at least, to announce that something serious had happened: Cecilius had not been seen near the Capena Gate during the week, and although his absence could not be deplored as a misfortune, since it gave the poor Jews some respite, it certainly tended to increase the anxiety and the sad forebodings of the colonists.

Olinthus resolved to unravel this mystery. In consequence, one morning, he left his mother, whose anxious fears were as great as his own, and started in the direction of the Maximus Circus—in the neighborhood of which the house rented to Cecilius by Tongilianus was situated—with the determination not to return home, until he should have ascertained what had become of Cecilia.

Upon reaching the crossing of the Triumphal Way, he saw a great crowd of people, and though little curious or inclined to tarry, he was compelled to stop, for the street was so completely obstructed that a consul's lictors could not have succeeded in clearing the way.

Olinthus inquired what was the cause of this gathering, and was told that two men were quarrelling and fighting. It was annoying to be detained by an incident of so little

importance, and Olinthus would have turned away, when certain words spoken by a familiar voice made him start and awakened in him a sudden interest.

It was the voice of Cecilius, and the words, accompanied by many curses, were these:

"You wretched vespillo! infamous servant of Libitina! Purveyor of Caron! May the Styx ingulf you! It is through you I have lost my daughter! Take this! and this!"

The dull sound of blows were heard, followed by groans. Evidently, the vespillo was getting the worst of the fight.

Olinthus upon hearing these words had pushed forward, elbowing his way through the dense crowd. He succeeded in reaching the front rank of spectators and saw that he had not mistaken the voice: Cecilius was belaboring a man who, although a stranger to Olinthus, was no other than our old acquaintance Gurges.

When Cecilius fell senseless on his door step, after seeing his daughter carried off by her master, he was picked up and carried in by some neighbors who had witnessed the lamentable scene, the news of which soon spread about. Gurges, when he learned that Cecilia had been sold, became very indignant; and, not dreaming that he had been the principal cause of this hateful transaction, hastened to the tax-gatherer's house, to crush that unnatural father under the most vehement reproaches.

But at the first word spoken by the vespillo, Cecilius recognizing him, had sprung up from the bed on which he was reclining overwhelmed with grief, and seizing a stick had struck the poor fellow three or four times with such vigor, that Gurges had sought safety in a precipitate flight.

Cecilius animated by revenge had pursued him and brought him down with a tremendous blow across the legs. A crowd had immediately gathered around the fallen vespillo and his infuriated persecutor. The old man, incapable of appeasing his anger, was continuing to strike the helpless Gurges, when his arm was suddenly seized by an iron grip. It was Olinthus who had bounded near him and stayed his hand.

"Has your daughter ceased to live?" he asked tremulously.

"She lives, but it were better she were dead and

all owing to this wretch!" replied Cecilius, still furious, although the sight of the insigna of Olinthus' military rank caused him to pause.

"What do you mean?" resumed the latter, pale and trembling with emotion.

"Cecilia is a slave!"

"Cecilia a slave?" repeated Olinthus, with a cry of horror.

"Yes, . . . I sold her! . . ." said Cecilius gloomily. "I sold her to pay this wretch! What is that to you, centurion?"

And as Olinthus, sinking under this terrible revelation, made no answer, Cecilius raised his stick to strike his victim once more. But Gurges, who had risen, avoided the blow, and the stick striking the pavement was broken by the shock.

"Fool!" cried the vespillo. "You strike me, and there stands the man who has caused your daughter's loss."

And he pointed at Olinthus.

"This man the cause of my daughter's loss?" said the unhappy father, with stupor, "how can that be?"

"Don't you see that it is Olinthus! . . . Yes, Olinthus the Jew, the Christian, . . . he who was to have married Cecilia!"

"Olinthus! That man Olinthus! Oh! . . ."

Cecilius was unarmed, but his fingers clutched the centurion's arm with such desperate violence that the sleeve of the latter's fine white *sagum* was stained with blood.

But Olinthus was another sort of adversary than Gurges. With one jerk he shook off Cecilius; with one look he stopped all further aggression.

"Touch not the shield of the emperor!" he exclaimed in a commanding voice.

And perceiving some hostile demonstrations in the crowd to whom he had been designated as a Jew, he drew from the scabbard his short, broad, Spanish sword, the bright blade of which flashed in the sun.

"Make way there!" he said, contemptuously.

The words and the act awed all this multitude; their ranks opened before the centurion.

"Come," said the latter, addressing Cecilius, "take me to your house."

Cecilius did like the crowd; he obeyed. Gurges saw fit to follow them.

"Tell me now," said Olinthus, when they had reached the tax-gatherer's house. "What has happened? what have you done? where is your daughter?"

"I sold Cecilia because I owed this man ten thousand sestertii, which I could not pay," replied Cecilius, designating Gurges. "But," he added, looking firmly at the centurion, "I would have given myself up if my daughter had consented to renounce those accursed Jews to whom you belong. . . ."

"Oh my God, I thank you!" thought Olinthus. "Cecilia has remained strong in your faith and your name, which she has confessed!"

"Wretched father!" he resumed, turning to Cecilius, "did not the thought strike you that those *accursed* Jews would have saved your daughter by paying this man?"

"And the Pontiffs who claimed twenty thousand sestertii for the sacrilege against Jugatinus? And my place?" Cecilius asked.

Olinthus not understanding this, made him relate all the circumstances with which we have acquainted the reader.

"I am much deceived," said the centurion, "if you are not the victim of some villainous plot. But, at all events, the twenty thousand sestertii would have been paid to the pontiffs. As for your employment, do you think that Flavia Domitilla would have left the father of Cecilia, whom she loves dearly, in want? such was not her project! . . unhappy father!" added Olinthus in a commiserating and sorrowful tone. "How much harm you have done because you would not come to those Jews so odious and despised."

Cecilius, crushed by remorse, overwhelmed by the shame of his act, and his heart torn by the thought of his daughter, bowed his head under the weight of those simple words, and could not find words either to complain or to accuse.

Gurges, a silent witness to this scene of woe, seemed much embarrassed. The unfortunate vespillo, first, but involuntary cause of the young girl's misfortune, felt that all was over with him. His unlucky passion had brought him disdainful refusals, bitter disappointments, and, at last, a severe beating from which his bruised limbs were still smarting. Moreover, he felt that Cecilius and Olinthus despised him.

But Gurges was a good-natured fellow. He still felt a

great tenderness for this young girl whom he had hoped to make his wife, and he swore, in his heart, to devote himself to rescuing her from her sad fate, if it could still be done.

So, when the centurion exclaimed:

"This is not the time to shed tears. Cecilia must be rescued from the hands of that villain! I shall do it!"

Gurges approached timidly, aud taking Olinthus by the hand:

"Allow me," he said, "to assist you in this task. All I possess is yours to redeem this young girl and to restore her to her father."

"Thank you," replied the centurion, moved by so much devotion. "You are a worthy young man, and I accept your assistance. Let us go together to see this Parmenon. He will have to give us back Cecilia!"

The two young men departed, leaving Cecilius, who, his hands raised to heaven, was making vows for their success

Olinthus and Gurges thought that a single visit to the slave-dealer's tavern in the *Villa-publica*, would suffice for a satisfactory settlement of this matter. Parmenon could not refuse to give up Cecilia, when tendered his ten thousand sestertii and a suitable additional amount. This transaction was the most natural thing in the world, there could arise no difficulty.

The two young men walked on chatting hopefully about Cecilia; what joy and gratitude she would feel when she would see herself delivered by them!

"It is to me she will owe her salvation!" Gurges was saying. "It will doubtless be for your benefit, but, at least, I shall have some title to her friendship, and this is a good deal for me!"

"My dear Gurges," Olinthus would reply, "when Cecilia will be my wife, we shall ever remember together your generous assistance."

Gurges was not without feeling a certain sadness when Olinthus spoke of his approaching marriage with Cecilia; but when he compared his own mournful garb to the brilliant uniform of the young centurion, he could not blame the young girl's choice.

"By Venus Libitina!" he would say to himself, with rare modesty and touching candor; "I think I would have done as she did, had I been in her place."

When the two young men reached Parmenon's tavern, they found that worthy walking up and down in front of his vacant platform.

It had been agreed between Cecilia's future liberators, that Gurges would be the spokesman. This arrangement flattered the vespillo's vanity. It was natural and proper that he should be the negotiator, since he was the original holder of the claim of which Parmenon had made such treacherous use, and since he was to advance the ten thousand sestertii required for Cecilia's liberation.

We say "advanced," for Olinthus had accepted the offer only as a temporary loan.

Gurges, giving his features the most amiable expression, approached the slave-dealer with a graceful bow, and said:

"My dear Parmenon, I come to repay you your ten thousand sestertii."

"What does this vespillo want with me?" said Parmenon disdainfully; and he resumed his walk.

"This vespillo is Gurges," replied Libitina's agent with a certain pride; "Gurges, who comes with this centurion, to claim a young girl named Cecilia."

"Ah! very well!" quote Parmenon, and a singular smile hovered on his lips. "Only the pretention seems to me rather bold."

"What difficulty can there be?" asked Gurges.

"Only this, that I do not wish to sell her to you," replied the trader.

"But," said Olinthus, seized with a vague anxiety, "there is no question of sale here. This young girl was transferred to you in guarantee of a claim which Gurges is ready to satisfy at this very moment. It seems to me that the debt being cancelled, the girl given in pledge must be returned to us."

"Centurion, do you know the proverb?" replied the slave-trader with insolence: "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam.* Let not the shoemaker go beyond his last. Which means that you may be a very gallant soldier, but you understand little about this sort of business!"

"None of your impertinence!" exclaimed Olinthus in a threatening tone; "Come, is it a profit you want? Name the sum!"

"I am an honest man," replied Parmenon, "and I need no pay to do what I should and what I will."

"Then, why refuse to return this young girl to her father, who sent us to claim her?"

"I will not return her, because her father sold her to me, and being therefore her master, I have the right to keep her if I see proper. Is this clear, centurion?"

"Moreover," he added, "to guard against any difficulty that may arise, I have had the act drawn up by the *antestat.* Here it is, you can satisfy yourself that it is regular."

Olinthus and Gurges remained dumfounded before this irrefragable proof. This act formed an unconquerable obstacle. The distress of the two young men could easily be detected in the paleness which spread over their features, and the involuntary trembling of their limbs.

"I double the amount!" cried at last Gurges.

"No, amiable vespillo, it cannot be done."

"I treble it!" said Olinthus.

"No, Centurion."

"One hundred thousand sestertii! . . . Upon my sword I swear you shall have them!"

"No, no, a thousand times no!" replied Parmenon unmoved.

Nothing remained but to kneel at this man's feet and beg him to relent from his inexorable resolve; but Olinthus understood that it would be abasing himself uselessly.

He withdrew, followed by Gurges, who shook his fist at Parmenon and swore that he would save Cecilia.

"Centurion," cried the impudent slave-dealer when the two young men were at some distance; "and you, amiable vespillo, you can come both! You, Primipilar, with your cohort, and you, vespillo, with your corpse-eaters! I await you, and am prepared to receive you!"

When Olinthus returned among his brethren and told them:

"Cecilia is a slave! Cecilia has been strong in her faith! Cecilia has been sold by her father!"

This news caused a wail of lamentation in the whole tribe, mingled with thanks to God who had given this young girl strength to suffer for His name and to glorify Him by her servitude. Then came a touching scene. These poor people hastened to bring all they possessed of any value, to Olinthus,

beseeching him to accept their offerings, in order that their sister might be redeemed and not remain in the hands of the wretch who, master of her body, might at a future day become master of her soul.

The mothers, followed by their children, brought the poor furniture of their homes and their humble garments, to be sold for making up Cecilia's ransom. The maidens sacrificed joyfully their simple ornaments and the few jewels their modesty permitted them to wear.

As for the men, they offered their strong arms. They would go with Olinthus to tear down and burn Parmenon's tavern, and rescue Cecilia from the flames and ruins!

"Thanks, sisters," Olinthus would say, addressing the women, "thanks for your charity and your love! I had not misjudged them when I offered Parmenon one hundred thousand sestertii for Cecilia."

"Well?" cried a thousand voices,

"Well, he refused," said Olinthus with despair. "But I have you, O my brethren," the centurion continued, turning to the men, "and with you Cecilia cannot be lost! Yes! we will go and rescue our sister from this wretch, we will give her back to her father and to her God!"

"Let us go! Let us go!" was the unanimous cry.

"Yes, let us go!" repeated Olinthus. "Our cause is holy and God will bless it!"

"Your cause is impious, and God would turn away from you!" said a voice, which all heard, and at which all stopped.

It was the voice of the Pontiff who had just arrived, having heard the rumor of Cecilia's misfortune.

"My children," resumed the venerable priest, with severity, "since when was violence permitted to the disciples of Christ? When did they learn to trample upon the laws? Centurion, was it to sustain or to overthrow them that the Emperor gave you this sword?"

A deep silence had succeeded to the tumult. These men but now so impetuous, remained silent and collected, listening to the voice whose authority they respected.

"Father," spoke at last Olinthus in a respectful tone, "is not the law odious which robs a father of his daughter? Must we permit that our sister perish in slavery? Does Christ recognize masters and slaves?"

"My son," replied the Pontiff, "Christ inspires feelings of humanity and kindness which will cause slavery to disappear in the course of time; but He has never said to the slave: 'thou shalt revolt against thy master,' nor to the citizens: 'You will tear down, with violence, that which exists.' Await patiently then, the designs of God, and however unjust and barbarous institutions may be, respect them until His breath shall destroy them! Let us teach the master charity towards his slaves, let us teach the world that all men are brothers, and the spirit of God will do the rest. Renounce, then, all design of rescuing Cecilia by force, from the master God has given her. It is the law! Learn to submit to it!"

Olinthus bowed to the wisdom of the holy interpreter of the religion of Christ, although he felt his blood boiling in his veins and his heart ready to burst with suppressed grief. Yet, he could not help exclaiming sorrowfully:

"O father! father! Cecilia is then lost forever!"

"No, Olinthus!" said Petronilla who had come near him. "I have the confident hope that this child who, alone among us, has had the happiness to sacrifice herself for God, will be returned to you by His almighty hand! Let us go to Flavia Domitilla; she has authority enough to conquer this man's refusal, treasures enough to tempt his avarice."

"Go, my son," said the Pontiff, "this is just and permitted. During your absence, I shall lift up my hands to God and I trust my prayers will be heard."

"We shall all pray for your success," cried all these men and women, filled with holy enthusiasm, and they followed the steps of the pontiff.

Flavia Domitilla offered Parmenon an enormous sum of money if he would relinquish his rights on the young girl.

Parmenon remained immovable.

The Consul Flavius Clemens, himself, interfered, now beseeching the slave-trader, now threatening him with all his authority.

Parmenon was undisturbed by threats and prayers. He showed the law to the Consul, and quietly told him that he intended to preserve and defend his legal rights.

The reader has, doubtless, already suspected that Marcus Regulus was behind Parmenon and maintained him in this obstinacy.

"See," the astute plotter would say to his vile tool; "how all these Jews are coming to us! Oh! I shall obtain all their secrets through that young girl! Their millions of sestertii! . . . It is laughable! Will not the Emperor give them to me? . . . And, besides, am I not rich enough? What I want is power, honors, and I shall have them. Parmenon, you wretch, if you falter I will turn you over to the pretor!"

There was a terrible secret between Regulus and Parmenon. Flavia Domitilla and Flavius Clemens struggled vainly to overcome this unknown obstacle.

But were the laws of Rome so barbarous that they admitted the violation of the first law of nature? Would not a court of justice annul this abominable contract by which a father had sold his child!

Pliny-the-Younger, the noble and brilliant pleader, and Pegasus, the great jurisconsult, were called upon to solve these momentous questions. Both were filled with indignation; both replied that long since Rome had ceased to see such shameful outrages, and promised that this monstrous deed of sale should be cancelled.

It was determined that Cecilius would claim his daughter before the tribunal of Recuperators.

Parmenon was duly summoned to appear.

Marcus Regulus prepared himself for the important struggle about to commence.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHAPTER ON ROMAN LAW.

THREE things had been treated by the Roman legislator with the same dryness of heart and inflexibility of spirit, although two were animated by the breath of God, and the third might be vivified by the thought of man.

These three things were: *the child*, *the slave*, and *the soil*.

All three corresponded to a solitary centre, the master—(*dominus*,) the keystone of the Roman legislation, which held them by the same title and with the same inviolable power.

In the beginning, the right of property had been the material possession of things; later, when it received a legal definition, the transfer to a third party required a second taking possession *by the hand*, the symbol and instrument of all human power.

Thence, the *mancipation*, an unique form of sale, whose etymology—*manu capere*—indicates sufficiently the brutal meaning.

The child, the slave, the soil were mancipated; that is the hand of the purchaser seized these three things with the same energy and the same immutable right. This new right made the child, the slave, and the soil equally the property of the master until he chose to transfer them by another mancipation.

But, the more precious the thing, the less easily the original right could cease.

Thus, land once mancipated ceased to belong to its owner. The same with the slave, unless he was set free, for the power of the master extended beyond emancipation, through the rights of patronage and certain obligatory services imposed on the freedman.

But, over the child, the essential property, the power of the father never ceased entirely. Set free by the master who had bought it, it became again, legally, the property of the father, who could sell it an indefinite number of times.

Such was the law framed by the inflexible genius of Romulus. The law of the Twelve-Tables did not change this, but it limited the rights of the father on his son to three mancipations, after which the son was completely free from paternal authority. *Si pater filium ter venumduit, filius a patre liber esto.*

As for the daughter, a single mancipation was sufficient to liberate her. The Roman legislation set little value on woman.

The son sold by his father suffered all the rigors of slavery. The only consolation reserved in his favor, by the law, was that he remained ingenuous and even a Roman citizen by right, whilst a slave in fact.

In order to understand the influence of Christianity on a society where such a legislation existed, we must cast a look on the reign of Augustus, the luminous point between the

greatest height of the Roman power, and its approaching fall.

Like the god Janus who opened the year, and whose double face contemplated the past and looked into the future, Augustus saw all the splendors of the republic, and the foreshadow of the dark days of the empire.

Before him all is bright, glorious, wonderful civilization; after him darkness, abasement, universal barbarism.

And nevertheless, what occurs during this resplendent period of the republic and this declining period of the empire? What is thought of the child? what is done with the slave? what becomes of the soil?

Until Augustus' time all remains mute, plunged in the immutability of death.

Omnia muta
Omnia sunt deserta, ostentant omnia mortem.

After Augustus, and all at once, the child takes his place at the family hearth, the slave becomes again a man, the soil thrills under the first touch of the spirit which will animate it.

Up to that time there had been, doubtless, great poets, eminent historians, orators, philosophers and jurisconsults; yet what voice spoke in favor of the child, of the slave, of the soil, even? who mourned over this treble captivity? who condemned these institutions?

Among those Romans who glorified Brutus and Manlius Torquatus for the murder of their children, and who looked upon the slave as a being assimilated to the brute creation, there were, doubtless, fathers truly worthy of that name, and really kind masters. Individual virtues were not wanting in the republic; and there could not be found in the corrupt times of the empire such a large number of citizens remarkable for the excellence of their private life.

But this fact only gives more weight to our remarks. How is it that these virtuous republicans did not improve the legal status of their children, that they did not admit that the slave was a man, that they did not understand that the soil, though an inert matter could be ruled by the will.

And how is it that the Romans of the decline, so miserably plunged in vice, should have suddenly risen above the brutal traditions of their ancestors; and that the first cries so long expected by suffering humanity should have been heard in

their poetry, in their history, in their philosophy and their legislation? Strange contradiction! it was during the time of Nero, of Vitellius and Domitian, that these mysterious voices were heard which, condemning the past, prepared the future.

It seems as if Providence purposedly left an interval between the reign of Augustus when there still lived the memory of ancient virtues, and the time when these would disappear under the influence of the monstrous vices of his successors, in order to show more clearly whence came these new doctrines and what was their heavenly origin.

It is, in fact, only when Peter appeared in Rome, when Paul spoke these great words "My Brethren," that we see this hardness softening, the heart opening to the novel feelings of loving kindness, and the books and the law becoming at last the faint echo of this strange language, so different from what had hitherto existed.

The hour of God had come after that of man. He resumed the task which had baffled human wisdom, and as the first act of his presence, He imposed on these generations born of injustice, and stationary in their egotism, the omnipotence of equality.

Thought prevailed on the ruins of form, and science became profound enough to be Christian. The jurisconsults prepared the emancipation of matter by making the mind and will of man prevail in his agreements; to them are due the glory and usefulness of those principles by virtue of which our modern society, unfettered and performing all its acts in the name of intellect, transmits the soil and all other things without having to touch them with the hand and casting them off like an uncomfortable garment.

Yet, amidst this breaking of fetters, the child, like the slave and the soil, was to retain the seal of servitude, from which triumphant Christianity alone could free the world.

No voice had yet been raised, strong and courageous enough to prohibit the sale of children by their father, for, the first text containing this great prohibition is a constitution of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian. This text upon examination, however, is found to admit a fact established by usage, rather than proclaim a prohibition no longer needed.

Such was the grave interest of the question to be discussed

before the tribunal of the Recuperators, in connection with Cecilia's sale by her father.

On one side was the formal and pitiless text of the Law of the Twelve Tables, so long observed, forming part of the fundamental law of Rome, and which had never been abrogated or even modified by any contrary legislation.

On the other, the general feeling, public indignation, the voluntary abandoning of a barbarous law, and the secret but certain tendencies of the public mind towards generous ideas more worthy of man and of the sanctity of family ties.

Would these considerations prevail against a law which had once been deemed just and necessary?

And if usage and morals, which may sometimes transform the law through long and universal practice, were invoked, would they be powerful enough and sufficiently in conformity with Roman reason, to triumph over a positive text and to erase it from the brazen Tables deposited in the Capitol under the custody of the protecting god of the empire?

CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE THE PRETOR.

THE Pretor decided summarily, cases of little importance or of easy proof, as we have seen an example in the case of Parmenon's claim against Cecilius. But in grave cases such as when a citizen claimed as his own a thing in the possession of another party, the latter upon being summoned was obliged to produce into court the thing claimed, in order that the plaintiff might identify it and that there should not be, therefore, any possible error as to the object in litigation.

This preparatory proceeding was a necessary formality which preceded all trial. It gave rise to singular, and as in Cecilia's case, painful scenes, on account of the struggle which it was customary for the contending parties to engage, assisted by their witnesses and their friends—the plaintiff endeavoring to wrench the thing claimed from his opponent's hands, and the latter resisting with the same energy.

The Pretor then feigned to perceive the quarrel going on under his eyes. He ordered the contending parties to be separated and brought before him. He then heard their respective arguments, and generally decided that the possessor should retain the thing, until further trial, but should deposit with his adversary a guarantee equivalent to the value of his claim.

Subsequently to this first hearing, the plaintiff's demand was again examined, and the Pretor sent the case for trial before three Recuperators designated by him. The questions upon which this tribunal was to decide were submitted by the Pretor, thirty-days after the first hearing.

The suit brought for the recovery of Cecilia was of too great importance for the formalities required by law not to be strictly and rigorously complied with.

Consequently, on the day appointed, the Pretor Publius Aufidius Namusa proceeded to the Forum and took his seat on the permanent tribunal of the urban pretorship, which was situated at the eastern end of the place, a little below and to the left of the Arch of Fabius.

A large and tumultuous crowd had already assembled in the Forum to enjoy the moving spectacle of the struggle between a father and the man who had robbed him of his daughter; and to gloat upon the tears and despair of the child. In all times there has been found people eager to contemplate with morbid curiosity the sorrows of others.

We shall seek among this crowd, the persons directly interested in the case at issue.

We find near the tribunal, Cecilius, clad in the garments of a suppliant and with his hair smeared with ashes. It is easy to read on his careworn face the cruel emotions that fill his breast at this solemn hour. Near him stands his lawyer, the celebrated Pliny-the-Younger. He is there to assist the wretched father in his sad trial; and he endeavors in vain to teach him the dignity and moderation which the occasion demands.

Not far from these, stands Olinthus accompanied by a few of his brethren and by some pious women who have come to sustain his courage, and to comfort Cecilia by their presence and their sympathetic tears. A dark gloom overspreads the handsome features of the young centurion; but, never-

theless, a gleam of hope anon brightens his eyes from which the happy light of old has flown.

The devoted Gurges has not failed to come to the Forum. He has brought with him some of his men, and now and then gives them his instructions, in a low voice but with considerable warmth. His project is to take advantage of the heat of the struggle to give a sound beating to the hateful Parmenon.

This illegal intervention is certainly derogatory to the dignity of the Pretor and the respect due to justice; but it will be a great consolation for Gurges, and, in truth, we have not the heart to censure the poor vespillo.

As for Parmenon and his victim, they have not yet made their appearance in the Forum. But Marcus Regulus is sneaking through the crowd, and the inference is that the slave-dealer cannot be far.

Marcus Regulus has declared openly that he would take up Parmenon's case, and appear in person, to plead before the Pretor. This has surprised no one, for the case is shameful enough to suit Regulus, even if he did not have a more direct personal interest in its issue—a fact, however, not generally known.

But Cecilius, Pliny-the-Younger, Olinthus and all Cecilia's friends are well aware that he is the cause of the young girl's misfortune, although they do not suspect the secret motives of his persecution.

Regulus manages to not come too near the old man and his friends, for he augurs little good from their threatening looks.

After some delay, which only increased the feverish curiosity of the crowd, Parmenon made his appearance with Cecilia, and surrounded by a numerous escort. He had evidently sought to make an insolent display of his right of brutal possession. The young girl was led forward like a victim ready for the sacrifice. She wore the coarse tunic of the slaves, and her hands were tightly bound together with a rope, the end of which was held by one of Parmenon's men.

Four months had elapsed since the poor child had fallen into the power of this wretch; for, notwithstanding the zeal and activity of her friends, the tedious delays of judicial

proceedings, protracted by the efforts of Regulus, could not be overcome. Her person bore the evidence of the cruel sufferings to which she had been subjected. Her face was pale and thin, the bloom of youth and beauty had already faded away. And yet she found sweet smiles for the dear beings she saw in the crowd.

At the sight of his daughter, a loud cry escaped from the Tax-gather's lips, and with one bound he was near her, clasping her in his arms, and calling upon the gods to restore her to him.

Parmenon seized Cecilius round his waist and endeavored to wrench him from his daughter's embrace, but all his strength could not move the old man who stood immovable like a bronze statue.

Olinthus drew his short sword, and the bonds which held his betrothed captive fell to the ground, cut in twain.

Meanwhile, Gurges was performing wonders. Already Parmenon's escort had been dispersed by the vespillo and his stout companions; the wretch, himself, struggling vainly, was about to succumb under their blows. For a single instant Cecilia found herself free, in the midst of her friends! But the Pretor has spoken in the name of the law; the lictors lower their fasces over the young girl's head, and the struggle ceases.

All bowed to the majesty of justice and the respect due to the popular and feared Roman magistrate.

Regulus only waited for this intervention, and Pliny-the-Younger, himself, asked that the case should proceed with the calmness and moderation which should accompany judicial decisions.

Publius Aufidius Namusa, then called upon the two adversaries to come forward and state their difference. Cecilius making an effort to overcome his emotion, stood up before the Pretor, and declared that he had come to claim his daughter unjustly held by Parmenon.

The latter replied that the thing vindicated was indeed the daughter of Cecilius, but that the latter, by a regular act of mancipation, had transferred all his rights upon her to him, Parmenon.

He appealed to the testimony of the five witnesses to the sale, by whom he had taken care to be accompanied; and

he placed before the Pretor, the act of mancipation drawn up by the antestat.

It was now the duty of the two lawyers to present the question in its legal character.

Pliny-the-Younger, in a short improvisation, set forth: "That the fact of Cecilia's mancipation to Parmenon was not disputed—it was unfortunately but too certain; but that, in law, this mancipation could not hold good, for two reasons: First, because the sale of a daughter by her father should be deemed null and void according to the spirit of the new Roman laws; second, because, even if it were valid in law, it should be set aside on the ground that Cecilius had been subjected to influences and made to entertain fears which controlled his will and destroyed the liberty of his consent."

"When the time comes," added Pliny-the-Younger, and his penetrating glance was fixed on Regulus, "I shall prove these facts by uncontrovertible testimony. For the present, all the Pretor must needs know, is that the object of the action we claim the right to bring, is to attack the principle of an abominable sale, and, at all events, to oppose to it the exception *quod metus causa** which suffices to viciate radically any convention.

Marcus Regulus knew very well that whatever the grounds of opposition taken against Cecilius' claim, the Pretor would not fail to authorize the trial. Assuming, therefore, an air of ease, he replied that he would make no opposition to the trial demanded by Cecilius; that he would show, when the time should come, that the sale was perfectly valid, both in law and from having been freely consented by the father; but that he protested against the allegation that Cecilius had been subjected to any undue influence or terror. He therefore, demanded that, provisionally, the young girl purchased and paid for by Parmenon, a legally authorized slave-dealer, should be adjudged to the latter and remain in his possession.

Pliny-the-Younger endeavored to obtain that Cecilia should

* The exception *quod metus causa* could be filed whenever one of the parties to a contract alleged that at the time said contract was made, he was under the influence of a real fear which impairing or destroying his liberty of judgment, prevented consent.

be placed in the care of a third party, during the litigation; but the mancipation not having been attacked in its form, and having the conditions of an authentic act, the Pretor decided that Parmenon should not be deprived of the services of his slave, unless by a final sentence of the court annulling the sale.

Cecilia was therefore adjudged to Parmenon. Then, the Pretor sent the party before the tribunal of the Recuperators, but reserved a delay of thirty days to prepare the form of trial.

Parmenon, protected by the magistrate's lictors, wished to enjoy the brutal satisfaction of insulting the sorrow of his adversaries, by replacing on Cecilia's wrists, the bonds cut by Olinthus. He proceeded to perform this task slowly, in the Forum, defying the anger of those who threatened him, and laughing at the tears which his cruelty drew from the eyes of the bystanders.

Cecilius gave vent to his grief in heart-rending groans; Olinthus, whilst invoking Heaven, could not restrain his tears; Gurges and his gloomy escort moved about excitedly, as if possessed by the furies. The poor Vespillo had again threatened the slave-dealer, and would have assailed him, but for the presence of the Pretor, and the fear that Parmenon would revenge himself upon his helpless slave, of the outrages he might be made to suffer.

The most indifferent spectators were astonished at Cecilia's calm resignation. With voice and look, she comforted her father and her friends, and encouraged them with the hope that God would not forsake her.

When she departed with her master, the people opened their ranks, and showered their marks of sympathy upon her, whilst they followed Parmenon with their curses.

The crowd then surrounded Pliny-the-Younger. He was asked whether he would succeed in cancelling this barbarous contract; a touching appeal was made to his well known eloquence, and they conjured him to save Cecilia and restore her to her father.

Some voices inquired threateningly for Regulus, but the wretch had already disappeared from the Forum.

Such was the first act of this judicial drama, in describing which we have endeavored to give our readers a glimpse of the Roman customs.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIBUNAL OF THE RECUPERATORS.

THE second act was to be unraveled before the tribunal of the Recuperators. The three judges having no special court-house for their sittings, had met, as we have already stated, in the basilica Julia, the place where the Centumvirs generally assembled, and which from its vast dimensions, would permit them to give more publicity to the important trial.

The Pretor Aufidius Namusa had traced the form to be followed in rendering the judgment. It embraced the double hypothesis of the gain or loss of the suit by Cecilius, for the judges were invariably bound to adhere to the precise course indicated by the Pretor.

This formula or charge read as follows: "Caius Sulpicius Numerius—Aulus Agerius Ursidio—Publius Hortensius Niger. Be ye Judges.—If it appears that Cecilius did sell his daughter to Parmenon, declare that Cecilia belongs to the latter by the law of the Quirites. If it does not appear, condemn Parmenon to restore Cecilia to her father.

"If it appears that Cecilius consented to the contract only through fear, declare that it is null and void; if it does not appear, condemn Cecilius to leave his daughter in Parmenon's hands."

Marcus Regulus had prepared himself with great care, for the coming struggle; but yet, he was not without fears as to the result of the trial.

Cecilius and his daughter were only poor people, it is true; but they had powerful protectors in the consul Flavius Clemens, the two Flavia Domitillas, and the young Cæsars, Vespasian and Domitian; would not the judges be swayed by these influences? If the Emperor had not been absent from Rome, Regulus would have felt no serious anxiety; but Domitian was in Dacia, absorbed in the cares of a dangerous war, and it had been impossible to solicit his intervention in a matter of whose importance for his secret designs he was ignorant. Regulus had tried to have the trial postponed, but Pliny, who foresaw the danger, had thwarted him. On the

other hand, Regulus was aware that this case had roused the public indignation; that he was suspected of being the prime mover in it; and he feared that the hatred accumulated in every heart, against him, might excite the judges to decide in favor of his adversary. As, however, he had the law on his side, he resolved to brave all those threats, to crush those adverse influences and to triumph, even if he had to look to Tartarus for support.

No promises, no means were spared to influence the judges, and as a last resort, the astute lawyer evoked the threatening image of the stern Domitian, by spreading the rumor that this trial was a question between the Emperor and the Christians, between the imperial power and the secret tendencies of this odious sect!

The interior of the basilica Julia presented an imposing spectacle. Circular benches had been put up, in advance, to accommodate the multitude, at a certain distance from the seats (*subsellia*) reserved for the judges, the lawyers and the parties.

The seats of the judges were placed on a semi-circular platform from which they could command a full view of the assemblage. Those of the lawyers were a little lower; the plaintiff occupying the right and the defendant the left of the magistrates.

Further back, and on a still higher stand than that of the judges, was the curule chair of the Pretor. This magistrate never took part in the trials where he had designated the judges, but his empty chair was there to remind that, whether absent or present, justice was always rendered in his name. To this effect, there was placed in front of the curule chair, a pike, (*hasta,*) and a sword, the emblems of command, (*imperium,*) and of strength,

Not far from the seats of the lawyers, were placed the *clepsydra* by which the duration of the pleadings was measured. The clepsydra was a vessel somewhat in the shape of a funnel, from the minute hole of which the water escaped slowly. It took twenty minutes for a clepsydra to be emptied. The number of times it should be filled during a lawyer's speech was determined in advance. This number could be increased, the opposite party consenting. This was styled "granting water" (*dare aquam,*) which was not quite the same thing as giving force and eloquence to the speech.

The lawyers were very careful not to waste the water they had obtained. During the reading of documents or other interruptions, they never failed to ask the crier to hold the water (*sustinere aquam,*) which was done by stopping the hole at the bottom of the clepsydra with the finger, in order that the water measured for the speech should not flow uselessly.

Regulus never objected to the number of clepsydras consumed by his adversaries. It is true that he claimed reciprocal indulgence and made an enormous abuse of it.

Albeit, on the day of trial Regulus was ready for the struggle he had to sustain against Pliny-the-Younger. He had prepared himself for it with the superstition which it was his wont to mix with his most trifling acts, and he had not failed to consult the auspices. He had even been considerate enough to warn Pliny-the-Younger that these auspices were favorable to him, and consequently threatening for his (Pliny's) case.

"So be it," Pliny had simply replied, "we shall see."

The celebrated lawyer had acted with the greatest reserve, since the beginning of the suit. He knew that he was watched by his adversary's spies, and that advantage would be taken of the most trifling circumstance. Accordingly, he had shut himself up in absolute silence and lived in the most complete retirement. This course made Regulus feel very uneasy, for he had had occasion to learn, at his own expense the magnificence and power of Pliny-the-Younger's voice, when he concentrated, by study and preparation all the resources of his extraordinary talent and admirable eloquence.

Caius–Sulpicius–Numerius, Aulus–Agerius–Ursidio and Publius-Hortensius Niger, the judges designated by the Pretor, having taken their seats in the court, their criers (*acensia*) or ushers proclaimed silence in the assembly.

Pliny-the-Younger then rose to open the case. It had been decided, the case being one of peculiar importance, that the lawyers should be entitled to as many clepsydras as would absorb the day's sitting of the court. Pliny, who was to have the closing reply, reserved his most crushing arguments for that occasion, and confined himself during this first attack, to the points involving the nullity of the monstrous contract by which a young girl had been deprived of her liberty.

With all the science of a great jurisconsult, and the eloquence of a brilliant orator, heightened by the burning indignation of a noble heart, he explained how the legislation which gave such impious rights to parents over their children, after subsisting too long, was at last disappearing under the double influence of public opinion and of the highest intellects among the jurisconsults, who repudiated it openly as barbarous and inhuman.

The admirable picture which he traced of the condition of public morals, of the disposition of the public mind and its tendency to more generous ideas, was so powerful in energetic simplicity and virtuous splendor, that when rising almost to sublimity, he beseeched the judges to associate themselves with this great movement towards a new life, and to let the iniquities of former days be buried with the past, the whole assemblage was carried away and interrupted him by their cries of enthusiasm and a thunder of applause.

Marcus Regulus, meanwhile, raised his hands to heaven as if protesting against these attacks on the tutelary institutions of the empire. The large black bandage which concealed half of his face, gave still more expression to the play of the uncovered features, upon which surprise and indignation were admirably depicted.

When Pliny-the-Younger came to speak of the influences which had controlled the free will of Cecilius, he was designedly very concise. He demonstrated clearly, and by means of the most elementary principles of law, that Cecilius, harrassed in every direction by Parmenon's claim which threatened his liberty, by the letter of the city-prefect which made him fear for his last resources, and by the citation of the Pontiffs which placed him under the terror of an accusation of sacrilege, had necessarily given way, losing the consciousness of his own acts, and betrayed himself and his daughter with a facility that he would certainly not have shown, had he enjoyed his ordinary calmness of mind and coolness of judgment.

"And I suppose," proceeded the speaker, covering Marcus Regulus with a penetrating glance, "that those causes were true, and that they were not a snare set for the weakness and credulity of an old man; for, if all these elements of terror were as vain as their causes were ridiculous;

if they were combined with profound perversity; if a ecret hand applied itself to striking repeatedly at the feelings of this wretched father so as to crush them successively, how more truly we could claim that the contract is not binding, and that this shameful sale was never freely consented by the father!"

After a magnificent peroration in which he made a touching appeal to the conscience of the judges, Pliny-the-Younger stated that he was through with his case, and modestly resumed his seat. He had used the water of six clepsydras, or, otherwise, had spoken only two hours.

The case, however, was continued until the next day, on the demand of Regulus, who affirmed that he would require an entire sitting to reply to his adversary.

Regulus seemed delighted with the turn given to the argument. On his way out of court, surrounded by his friends and clients, he criticized freely Pliny's discourse.

"He was vehement and well inspired in the first part," he said, "but in his conclusion, he was far below his usual standard! What advantages he has given me!"

And as even wickedness finds flatterers, there were not wanting some to proclaim that Pliny's speech was pitiful, and to promise their eloquent patron an easy victory. Regulus however, had had the sorrow to hear the acclamations and songs of the crowd escorting Pliny in triumph.

The reply of Marcus Regulus, on the next day, was a commonplace speech, void of that eloquence which, coming from the heart speaks to the heart, carrying conviction with it. Yet the speaker was frequently interrupted by certain exclamations such as: Very well! Bravo! Nothing better! (*pulchre! præclare! festive!*) accompanied by exaggerated applause.

However, it was not as on the preceding day, a whole assemblage giving way spontaneously to enthusiastic admiration; the words of praise and frequent plaudits we have mentioned came only from a few isolated individuals in the audience, who were evidently acting under orders. It was customary in those days for a speaker to provide himself with these hired admirers, and the greater his mediocrity, the more of these manifestations of mercenary zeal, the judges and the public had to bear. Marcus Regulus held these distributers of glory in high esteem.

His plan of defence was of the simplest. He did not attempt to reply to that part of Pliny's argument where Cecilia's sale was attacked in the name of the eternal principles of morality, civilization and family ties. As might be expected, he confined himself to the purely legal grounds, and argued that the text of the Law of the Twelve Tables was in perfect harmony with the public and private constitution, with the interests of the commonwealth and of the family; and that it had never been repealed by contradictory legislation or even abrogated by custom, as alleged.

He recalled all the circumstances in which the greatest citizens of Rome had exercised this right of the father; and he further established that on certain rare but recent occasions, citizens had continued, without opposition, to show by similar or analogous acts, their power over the bodies of their children.

But the speaker dwelt with greater force on the question of Cecilius' free consent.

"How," he exclaimed, "could the freedom of this consent be vitiated? By underworkings, by fraudulent suppositions, by means of terror held suspended over the head of the father! But what can be more real than the mysterious affiliation of Cecilius with the Jews of Capena gate? Is not his daughter known to be a Christian, and then is it not natural that Honoratus Messio should have wished to discharge an unworthy and treacherous agent? Will it be said that the Pretor's judgment in favor of Parmenon was supposititious? Was not the transfer made by Gurges of his claim against Cecilius a reality and an act performed in good faith?"

"It was an infamous surprise, and Parmenon and you are two great villains!" cried out the vespillo, at this mention of his name.

But his voice was immediately drowned in the furious cries of the lawyer's stipendiaries.

Regulus proceeded without noticing the interruption:

"Finally," he said, "there remains the Pontiff's citation! Great gods!" he continued, attempting an oratorical flight, "have ye not been insulted in the face of Rome? Was not the statue of the divinity venerated by young maidens contemptuously dashed to pieces on the pavement of the

public street? And by whom? By a Jewess! By a Christian! By the enemy of our creed! O horror! O abomination! O sacrilege! I should throw a veil over my face and present myself in the attitude of a supplicant . . ."

"And your bandage, and your mourning toga?" remarked Pliny-the-Younger with a smile, trying to remind his adversary of the theatrical desolation exhibited in his apparel.

But Regulus seemed struck with a well-timed deafness.

"What has Parmenon done?" he continued, "what has this honorable citizen done, to whom they would dispute to-day his dearly paid property? Not only did he hand to Cecilius his title for the ten thousand sestertii, but he paid the Pontiffs! Yes, he has settled the penalty for the sacrilege and here is the receipt!"

And Regulus waived triumphantly a sheet of papyrus, the apparent proof of the twenty thousand sestertii paid by the slave-trader to the Pontiffs for abandoning the prosecution.

"So," resumed Parmenon's counsel, "I have paid thirty thousand sestertii for rights of which they now want to deprive me on the singular pretext that I have influenced the man whom I found surrounded by these embarrassments! O good faith! O justice! As if it was I who invented the anguish and committed the crime! As if Cecilius did not have an evident interest in escaping from the responsibilities that threatened him! Well, he has done it! Can one maintain any longer that it was not in the full liberty of his right and all the strength of his consent!"

Regulus ended with a peroration which drew several rounds of applause from his hired supporters. He showed in it skill if not talent. He made a gloomy picture of the misfortunes that awaited the capital of the world, if no stop was put to the dark and threatening enterprises of those accursed Christians, who sprung up in every direction and who would invade all society. "Such is their audacity that they would destroy even the emperor's power. What, then, would the divine Domitian think, if he learned that Roman magistrates have hesitated for a single instant between him and the obscure Christian who is secretly supported by persons interested in violating the rights and the majesty of the empire!"

It was time that Regulus should bring his speech to an

end. He was completely exhausted. The clepsydras had been repeatedly re-filled; the usual hour for closing the court was passed, and several times already the judges had sent the usher to examine the sun-dials in the Forum. The trial was therefore continued until the next day, when Pliny-the-Younger would reply to Regulus.

Long before the court assembled on the following morning, the basilica Julia was besieged by an immense crowd. Never had such deep interest been manifested in the issue of a trial. A confused clamor filled the Forum and the soil seemed to tremble under the thousands impatient feet.

Pliny-the-Younger and Marcus Regulus who came accompanied by their clients, with the exception of Parmenon, who had not attended the pleadings, made their way with great difficulty through the compact living mass.

Pliny placed little reliance in the high philosophy of the judges or in the disposition of their minds to embrace the generous sentiments which should have moved them in favor of Cecilia. He had reserved his most vigorous arguments for this last test. He was about to change his plan of attack and to deal Regulus personally, the most unexpected blows.

He began by narrating how Cecilius in his distress had applied to Regulus; what advice he had received from him; to what perfidious insinuations he had yielded. Then, commenting upon these facts with wonderful sagacity, and analyzing all these details with the patience of a mind which sees the truth and wishes to make it felt, the eloquent lawyer, unable to restrain his indignation, gave vent to it in these terrible words:

"O Regulus, I recognize here your dark doings! The evil is there, and I can affirm that you did it. Yes, for who is acquainted with the shameful acts of your life, for who knows your heart—that unclean sink overflowing with the foulest iniquity—there can be no doubt. Your hand, red with so many murders, has alighted on this poor girl; I recognize its bloody impress! It is you who have prepared those odious snares! By all the gods! it is you who have accumulated on the head of this wretched father all the misfortunes through which he has been led to sell his daughter. O shame! O crime! Cecilius came to this man for advice, and this man played with a father's despair as the tiger plays

with his prey. Oh, Regulus! truly have you been styled the most pitiless of wild beasts! . . ."

These last words of the orator contained a terrible allusion to the remark recently made by Metius Modestus, and generally repeated in Rome, to which we have already alluded.

Regulus was boiling with rage. He seized this opportunity to interrupt his adversary:

"Pliny," he hissed, and his voice was as sharp as the point of a sword, "what do you think of Metius Modestus?"

And he threw a glance of implacable defiance to the judges.

To understand the full import of this remark, it must be known that Domitian had recently banished Metius Modestus for not rendering a sentence in conformity with the imperial views. It was therefore a threat directed to the magistrates. It was not only a dangerous question for his adversary to answer, but a warning to those who might be tempted to hesitate in the present circumstance.

Regulus stood up, with flaming eyes, awaiting with hateful anxiety Pliny-the-Younger's answer.

The latter saw at once the snare:

"I shall reply to your question," he retorted with perfect composure, "when the magistrates will have to judge it."

"I ask you," insisted Regulus, trembling with rage, "what you think of the devotion shown to Domitian by Modestus?"

"I think," replied Pliny immediately, "that it is not permitted to discuss a question after judgment has been rendered!"

Regulus, disconcerted by so much presence of mind, remained silent, and took his seat, still angry and threatening.

The blow had told, however. If Pliny had saved himself by his ready answer, his case was compromised and would probably be lost. He read its fate on the embarrassed countenance of the judges.

It was in vain that he made renewed efforts to repair this severe check, and that he rose to the most sublime height of eloquence. His voice was but a mere sound finding no echo in those who heard them. How could the men who had trembled and grown pale at the mention of the terrible Domitian, listen to the appeal of injured innocence?

Pliny-the-Younger left the court-room, boiling with indignation at his adversary's wickedness, and deeply grieved at the shameful weakness of those who were about to betray their own conscience through fear of a villain's denunciation.

Regulus retired in triumphant security.

CHAPTER XI.

TORTURES AND CONSTANCY.

THE trial had lasted three days; on the fourth the Recuperators again met to deliberate upon the judgment which was to be rendered in the afternoon, according to the provisions of the law of the Twelve Tables. The basilica was again filled with an anxious and silent crowd. The sixth hour of the day having arrived, Caius-Sulpicius-Numerus, the senior judge, delivered the following sentence, in a solemn voice:

"It appears that Cecilius had a right to sell his daughter to Parmenon.

"It does not appear that the consent of Cecilius was influenced by any undue fear.

"Consequently, it is ordered that Cecilia remain the property of Parmenon, according to the law of the Quirites."

The judges then retired amidst the lamentations of the young girl's friends, the murmurs of dissatisfaction of the crowd, and the acclamations of Regulus' partisans.

We have got back to the precise point at which we commenced our narrative; but before proceeding, we must say something about the sufferings which the unfortunate Cecilia had borne during the few weeks which elapsed between her mancipation to Parmenon and her purchase by the divine Aurelia.

When Marcus Regulus, through his agent, obtained possession of the young girl, it was not his design to detain her any longer than was necessary to extort from her the information he was seeking for Domitian. This end accomplished, he intended to return her to her father, provided the latter would reimburse him the amount expended by him; together

with a round profit. Avarice, it will be remembered, was a leading trait in the character of this vile informer, and he never consented to lose anything as long as he could avoid it.

When, to his great astonishment, he saw the immense offers made by Flavia Domitilla for the freedom of the young girl, he asked himself, while refusing the millions of sestertii tendered to Parmenon by that wealthy and charitable matron, whether he could not secure this magnificent prey and yet detain Cecilia long enough to accomplish his purpose. He distrusted Parmenon, the legal and apparent owner of the young girl, who could, if tempted by these unheard of offers, destroy his hopes at one blow, by returning the daughter to her father.

After due reflection, Marcus Regulus ordered Parmenon to propose to Cecilius to convey the girl back to him in exchange for the million offered, provided the father would let the mancipation remain in force one month. He hoped that during this delay he could wrench from Cecilia the secrets of her friends and the names which it was so important for him to know. Cecilius, advised by Pliny-the-Younger had refused. Marcus Regulus then instructed Parmenon to bargain for a delay of one week. Cecilius replied that having had the shame of selling his daughter once, he would not confirm the infamous transaction by any such compromise.

"I want my daughter now," he cried, "and if you give her back to me, it is not one million of sestertii, but two millions which you will receive!"

Flavia Domitilla upon learning the refusal of her first offer had given orders that twice and even three times that sum should be offered, if necessary, to redeem Cecilia whom she loved like a sister, and who had so generously confessed her faith amidst the fearful dangers and sufferings of slavery.

Despite his usual self-control, Marcus Regulus could scarcely conceal his emotion when Parmenon reported that Cecilia's friends offered to double the sum first proposed, if the young girl was immediately set in liberty.

"Come with me," he said to the slave-dealer, after reflecting an instant; "in a few hours that immense sum will be ours! What a magnificent result, Parmenon! By all the gods, this is more than I ever hoped!"

The informer and his worthy accomplice proceeded to

the latter's tavern. Regulus hoped to extort by bribes and threats, an immediate confession from Cecilia.

"Send the girl here," he said to Parmenon, and leave us. I shall recall you directly."

Parmenon obeyed, and Cecilia was in the presence of her real persecutor.

"My dear child," said the arch-hypocrite, "I have come to restore you to freedom and your father."

Cecilia started, a hopeful surprise sent a fugitive glow to her delicate features; but this feeling soon vanished when she met the cold, anxious gaze of this man whom she had never seen, and whose sight caused her an instinctive fear. She stepped back, involuntarily; but gathering courage, she replied:

"I thank you, my lord. I shall always remember your generosity!"

Regulus had not failed to perceive the impression caused by his presence. He was angry thereat, and resolved to stop at nothing to attain his object. There was besides, little time to lose!

"Yes," he repeated, "I come to restore you to freedom and your father, but on one condition. . . ."

Cecilia looked up. She was firm now.

"That condition," resumed Regulus, who had made a slight pause, "is that you will reveal to me all the mysteries of the sect to which you belong, and tell me the names of those who are like you Christians!"

"O my God!" the young girl muttered with unspeakable contempt, "I felt that this man had not come to save but to destroy me!"

"Well?" asked Regulus, who feigned not to have heard.

"Well, my lord," replied Cecilia, "you must know that the Christians confess their faith but do not betray their brethren."

"So you refuse to reply to my questions? Take care!" exclaimed the wretch.

"I certainly refuse to betray," the courageous girl replied, unhesitatingly.

"Very well," said Regulus with a sneer. "We shall see if we can't make you change your mind," he added threateningly; and he called Parmenon.

"Show her," said the informer to his accomplice, "what a master is, and whether, when he questions, a slave can refuse to reply."

The slave dealer drew from under his garments a long, narrow and thick strap of leather, of the kind styled *taurea*, and uncovering the young girl's shoulders, commenced striking her violently. The first blows of the lash, cutting into the flesh like a sharp-pointed instrument, made the blood trickle in abundant drops.

The poor child who suffered for the first time this cruel torture, could not restrain her tears and her groans of anguish.

"Now," said Regulus, making a sign to Parmenon to stop, "will you speak?"

"Never!" replied firmly the heroic girl.

"Come, Parmenon, it seems the dose was too mild. Begin again."

And Parmenon, with stolid indifference, again plied the lash. But Cecilia's will seemed to grow stronger as her tortures increased: a single cry did not escape from her lips. But she prayed fervently.

"Strike! strike again!" cried the fiend, hoping still to conquer this tender girl whose strength was giving way.

But the child's constancy and courage were greater even than the rage of her torturers. Parmenon was compelled to stop. His arm had grown tired. And, besides, Cecilia had sunk senseless to the ground—an inert and bloody mass.

"Curses on the girl!" cried Regulus. "Oh! those Christians! it is impossible to conquer them! What shall I do?"

The brute's fiendish rage had led him too far. How could he return the girl now to her father, in this dreadful condition? It was useless to think of it. Besides, she had not spoken, and Regulus would never consent to release her without knowing her secrets and the names of so many illustrious people. Better to lose those two millions of sestertii, the thought of which awakened his avaricious thirst, than to neglect this chance which once lost might never present itself again. This vile and cruel man still hoped to make his victim speak. Her heroism did not excite his admiration, but his hateful rage.

"What is this sum," he argued, "compared to the reward

which awaits me if I succeed? A mere trifle. No, I shall not release her until she shall have spoken. And she shall do it! she shall speak! On my life I shall conquer her, or she will perish!"

"I shall be back to-morrow," he said to Parmenon. "It will not be too late. Until to-morrow, then, take care of your slave, so she may be in good condition in case we have to send her back."

On the next day and the day following, Regulus tried, by the same means, to overcome what he termed the obstinacy of the young girl. Cecilia, in a short time, had tasted all the tortures of slavery, all the sufferings that her father had mentioned to her to make her abjure her faith.

But why should we sadden the reader with the spectacle of these horrors? Has he not already understood that Cecilia's constancy would tire the rage of her persecutors?

Marcus Regulus found himself powerless against the resignation of his victim. He had lost the fruits of his infamous act, and he had not succeeded in obtaining the information he so ardently desired. He knew that Flavia Domitilla was a Christian, or, at least, he supposed so from her efforts to save Cecilia; but this was not sufficient proof to reach a relation of the Emperor, or even to denounce her. Notwithstanding her illustrious birth and high rank, this young matron was, moreover, of too little importance in the State, that Domitian should have anything to fear from her, or should feel any anxiety concerning her.

But the case was different with Flavius Clemens, his wife and their children, the two young Cæsars. These were great enough to give umbrage, and they must be followed and watched.

The undertaking was not without its perils. Regulus might lose his credit instead of gaining the Emperor's favor.

The Christians, so far, had not been persecuted solely on account of their doctrines. When Nero sacrificed them to his fury, it had been to divert the accusations brought against himself since the burning of Rome; and if Domitian now feared and wished to punish them, it was only because they were suspected of plotting against his power and the empire.

It was therefore necessary to prove to the Emperor not only that Flavius Clemens and his family were Christians, but that

they conspired for his overthrow; otherwise, Domitian, however inclined to shed blood when a pretext was offered, would not proceed against his own kindred without some serious proof.

The informer knew Domitian perfectly well; he could not disguise to himself the power and high favor of those he wished to designate to his vengeance, and he felt that he must be armed with convincing proofs, or he would succumb in the struggle.

So far he knew nothing; he could assert nothing positively! How could he excite the emperor's fear of the Christians, if he did not know their number? How could he alarm him with their secret designs, if he was ignorant of what took place in their assemblies? Could he point to them as already ascending the steps of the throne, when he had only vague suspicions of the affiliation of Flavius Clemens and his family with the creed of Christ?

Cecilia knew all these things and could have enlightened Regulus; but Cecilia was mute—the most cruel tortures had not wrenched from her a single confession! The informer's rage increased in proportion to the resistance of his victim, and he invented the most cruel tortures to make her speak. But Cecilia exhausted by her sufferings fell sick and came near dying.

Regulus began to fear the consequences of his infamy. He might be prosecuted for this murder, by the magistrate appointed since Nero's time to protect the slaves from the atrocities of their masters; and, as in this case, the slave was of free-born condition, the offender would be severely dealt with.

But he feared also that death would ravish his prey, and with it his hopes of fortune and ambition.

For these reasons he had the young girl nursed and cared for, better, and at greater expense than Cecilius could have done.

Cecilia's youth saved her. She lived to continue her wretched existence, but she was strengthened by her faith, comforted by the hopes which still lived in her heart, and by her love for Olinthus, which grew stronger every day.

It was amidst these circumstances that the tax-gatherer assisted by Pliny-the-Younger, brought suit against Parmenon

for the recovery of Cecilia. Marcus Regulus had new cause to fear, and devoted all his attention to the struggle about to commence. But he had little confidence in Parmenon, who, during the progress of this suit, could sell the young girl to his adversaries for a large sum. He compelled the slave-dealer to give her into the hands of a woman named Laufella, in whose fidelity he believed he could trust implicitly.

Immediately after the confirmation of Parmenon's rights by the Pretor, Regulus had resolved to sell Cecilia. It was the only means by which he could preserve a hold upon his victim with some security for his ulterior projects. By stipulating that she could never be emancipated,—which was permitted by the Roman laws—he remained forever, master of the girl's fate, and no longer feared treachery on the part of Parmenon or Laufella.

This life of perpetual slavery would frighten Cecilia, and sooner or later, she would seek to get out of it by betraying her secrets! Regulus would then purchase her from her master, or would exact a large sum for relinquishing the condition which formed an insuperable obstacle to the generous offers of the young girl's friends. Parmenon, in case Cecilia should be set free despite the clause prohibiting her manumission, could claim her, into whosoever's hands she might be found, even into her father's hands.

But whatever hypothesis should prove the true one, it was an atrocious act of revenge and the thought rejoiced this cruel man. The manner in which Cecilius had treated Regulus on the steps of the basilica Julia was not likely to soften his dispositions. When he threatened vengeance on the father who had made him feel the weight of his legitimate and natural indignation, Regulus swore to accomplish the threat without delay. We have seen what steps he took to effect this.

It mattered little what price could be obtained actually for Cecilia. Regulus looked to the future to reap the fruits of his infamous speculation. Still he fixed that price at one hundred thousand sestertii, one third of which he would abandon to Parmenon in order to secure his assistance when circumstances would require it. This was a large sum in Rome, where slaves brought, on an average, from two thousand to two thousand two hundred sestertii, and, at most,

ten and twenty thousand when they possessed some extraordinary talent. Yet, wealthy citizens had been known to pay exorbitant prices for certain slaves of a special category.

Cecilia was of free birth; she was in all the bloom of youth; her beauty was of an uncommon class; Regulus hoped that some purchaser would be found, who would not regret paying the large sum asked for such a treasure.

Such are the events and the abominable calculations which explain the presence of Cecilia on Parmenon's slave-stand, at the time the divine Aurelia's cortege, returning from Pompey's portico, passed near the Flaminius circus, on its way to the *Villa publica*. Marcus Regulus, concealed behind one of the pillars of the portico, was enjoying the spectacle of the young girl's shame and her friends' sorrow, when he recognized the livery of the divine Aurelia.

"O Fortune!" exclaimed the wretch, "will you cease at last to defeat my schemes? Let the emperor's niece purchase Cecilia, and I shall sacrifice to you a white heifer!"

This vow of Marcus Regulus can be easily explained. The divine Aurelia is related to Flavius Clemens and the two Flavias Domitillas; the Vestal Cornelia lives with her; if Cecilia enters her house, whether she speaks or persists in her silence, the informer may seize, by one lucky effort, the proofs he has so far vainly sought.

Will not the relations of the divine Aurelia feel the most hopeful joy when they learn that Cecilia fills the place of Doris? If her protectors could not obtain her release from Parmenon, will it not be easy now to restore her to her father, by applying to their young relation? Doubtless; but Regulus will watch and if Cecilia should cross that door with her freedom, Parmenon will be ready to claim her, in accordance with the conditions of the sale.

Besides, in these efforts there would be a new proof of Christianity, and Regulus may surprise it. Cecilia is a Jewess! If Flavius Clemens and his family had not embraced her creed, why should they devote themselves to this poor daughter of the people, placed so far beneath them.

Cecilia is a Jewess! But, then will she not associate herself to the efforts made to persuade the divine Aurelia to adopt this accursed superstition—the new faith of her relations? Oh! Regulus is well aware that Christianity, like

the bright flame, seeks to spread itself. But Aurelia is destined to the empire! she will not renounce this glorious destiny; she will bid her slave hush, but she will cry out against her family; and Regulus will be there to hear that cry, to bring that complaint to Domitian's ears.

And in that house, so closely watched, the informer sees his two other preys, the Grand Vestal and Metellus Celer, who must, in time, be dragged into the abyss. Decidedly, it is a good thing that Cecilia should be bought by the divine Aurelia. Regulus will have no cause to regret the death of Doris. The new slave will be more usefully than the old one; she who keeps silent in order not to betray her brethren, will be worth more than she who spoke to betray her masters. Regulus, with his crafty foresight, must have read in the future, for no sooner has Aurelia bought this young girl, than a cry of joy is heard:

"Daughter of the Cæsars, take this young girl to your home!"

And this cry comes from Christians.

So, the genius of good and the genius of evil are in presence!

They have had the same thought and the same presentiments.

Their aim alone is different!

CHAPTER XII.

THE OMEN TREE.

WHEN Aurelia returned home, she went at once, followed by Vibius Crispus, to the room occupied by the Grand Vestal. Cornelia, still overwhelmed by the shame of the punishment which had impaired her health, was reclining on the richly embroidered, purple cushions of her couch. Near her sat Metellus Celer, who, since the Vestal's arrival at Aurelia's house, scarcely ever left her.

Cornelia was then about thirty-five years old. Her features wore an august and imposing expression, and her tall figure was full of majesty. Her face had become wan and thin from deep-seated sorrow, and in her black, sunken eyes

glittered a sinister fire. And yet, when she smiled, there was on her features an undefinable blending of touching kindness and secret tenderness, of virgin pride and long-treasured resignation. She wore the plain and elegant dress of the virgins of Vesta: a long stole of the finest linen which fell over her feet, and a short white tunic, worn over the stole, and reaching a little lower than her waist; narrow bands held the heavy tresses of her raven-black hair; and the *sufibulum* or square veil fell in graceful folds over her neck.

Metellus Celer was seven years younger than the Grand-Vestal. He was clad in the *angusticlave*, or tunic ornamented with a narrow purple band, by which the simple knights were distinguished from the senators. His face wore the bloom of youth, and yet sorrow had left its unmistakable marks upon it. His smile was sad, and his clouded brow often betrayed the secret anxiety which embittered his life. Metellus loved the Vestal with a son's tenderness and a brother's passionate devotion. This feeling is easily explained: he owed his life to her; she had rescued him from a fearful death.

It seemed as if some great danger again threatened him, for there was an involuntary despondency in his manner; and Cornelia was gazing at him with a sort of terror. When Aurelia came in they were conversing in a low voice, as if they feared being overheared. At her sight they ceased speaking.

"Cornelia," said the young girl, joyfully, "I have just bought a charming little slave, to fill the place of Doris. Now don't you get her killed as you did the other," she added, addressing also Metellus.

The Vestal and the young man exchanged a rapid glance.

"Dear child," said Cornelia, "you do not know, you cannot know all the harm that Doris has done! Metellus was speaking of it when you came in. We are both denounced!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Vibius.

"It is a positive fact," said Metellus, "for I have it from a Pontiff, who got his information from Helvius Agrippa himself."

"And who made this denunciation?" asked Vibius.

"I have every reason to believe that it is that infamous Regulus, upon the information obtained from Doris!"

"It could not be otherwise," remarked Vibius, simply; and turning to the divine Aurelia:

"My dear ward," he added, "you cannot keep this new slave of yours a single day! She must be sold without delay!"

"And why, if you please, my dear guardian?" asked Aurelia in a tone of playful irony, for she thought Vibius had spoken in jest.

"Because," replied Vibius seriously, "that young girl belongs to Regulus! because it is he who sold her to you, he who introduced her into your house!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Cornelia and Metellus in a tone of alarm, for they realized the fearful import of this discovery.

"But, my dear guardian," resumed Aurelia, who could not understand all this terror, "why then, did you not prevent me from purchasing her? You should have told me! . . "

"You are perfectly right, my august ward, but on our way here I have reflected upon certain circumstances, and I am sure my conclusions are correct. I shall explain my meaning, listen. This young girl has recently been the object of a lawsuit that made a good deal of noise in Rome, although I am not acquainted with the particulars. However, I was told by Pliny-the-Younger who pleaded against Regulus, that this wretch had succeeded in having your slave adjudged to him under the name of one Parmenon—the very man who has just sold her to you!"

Vibius Crispus paused, for it seemed to him that Metellus Celer had made an involuntary motion of surprise upon hearing the name of Parmenon. But the young man said nothing.

"What convinces me now that I do not mistake, is that whilst the form of mancipation was being gone through with, I recognized Regulus, who seemed to take a great interest in it, for he approached the girl and whispered something in her ear which I could not hear. Well! is this clear enough? What do you think of it?"

"Oh! there can be no doubt," replied the Grand-Vestal and Metellus Celer. "This young girl must be a new spy sent by Regulus!"

"So," added Metellus, "you are quite sure that the slave dealer's name is Parmenon?"

"Quite sure," replied Vibius, looking at the young man with surprise. "Do you know him?"

"No," said Metellus thoughtfully. "And yet, this coincidence is very remarkable! . . . This man, Parmenon, interests me more than you can think!"

"Ah!" said Vibius, curiously.

"Come," continued Metellus, but speaking to himself, "Sositheus will return directly, and I shall know what to think about it!"

"But, after all," asked Aurelia, "is that man Regulus so much to be feared! What would be his object in setting spies to watch what takes place here?"

"My dear ward," replied Vibius, "permit us to not reply to your question. Only, if you do not wish the death of your friend," he added, pointing at the Grand-Vestal who shuddered, "sell that slave, do not keep her in your house!"

Metellus Celer was pacing the room in deep thought. The troubled condition of his mind was visible.

"My lord," he said, at last, stopping to address Vibius, "there is something passing strange in all this. I cannot move a step without finding Regulus in my path; his name is like a sword continually suspended over my head! Once already I well nigh perished! . . . Listen to me, my lord, I have strange and terrible things to tell you. You will know then why I am so devoted to the Grand-Vestal, and whether there is anything criminal in our intimacy. You may then perhaps discover the cause of Regulus' persecution, and tell us whether or not we should tremble."

"I listen, young man," said Vibius, in whom this preamble excited a lively curiosity.

"As for me," remarked Aurelia, "I shall retire. I must question, myself, my new slave, and find out if there is really any cause to distrust her . . . She is charming, and I warn you that I am not at all inclined to deprive myself of her services . . . It is enough that Doris has been sacrificed to Regulus . . . Great gods! that Regulus is like the *Swaggering Soldier* in the comedies of Plautus, he disturbs everything here! But this state of things cannot last. I shall complain to uncle Domitian!"

Metellus Celer and Cornelia made no effort to detain the young girl. Her going was a relief to them, for there

were certain circumstances connected with the events the young man was about to relate, that concerned Domitian, and could not therefore be mentioned in the hearing of the emperor's niece.

"Proceed, Metellus," said Vibius with impatient curiosity.

"You know, my lord," began the young man, "that my father, Lucius Metellus, had the honor of being the dearest friend of the Emperor Vespasian. He was much younger than that prince; but his family, living in Reata, in the Sabine country, had always been intimate with the Flavius family, which had been established in that city many years, and Vespasian carried back to my father, whom he had seen in his cradle, all the love he had received from our family.

"In Phalacrina, not far from Reata, the Flavius family had a modest country house. It was there Vespasian was born, on the fifteenth day of the calends of December, during the Consulship of Quintus Sulpicius Camerinus and Caius Poppæus Sabinus. There he was brought up by his paternal grand mother, Tertulla; there he died on the eighth of the calends of Julius, at the age of sixty-nine years, one month and seven days. It was there also that the Emperor Titus, of glorious memory, died at the age of forty-one years, of the swift and mysterious disease which carried him to his grave two months and twenty days after he had succeeded to his father.

"I insist on these details because I believe them necessary for a proper appreciation of the events I have to relate. The Emperor Vespasian was passionately fond of this poor country-house. He went there frequently and would never allow any change to be made to a place where everything reminded him of his infancy; his son, the great Titus, entertained the same worshipful veneration for that humble cradle of his illustrious family.

"I remember that when I was six or seven years old, the great Vespasian often took me by the hand and led me out to walk over the grounds. On several occasions we stopped before a magnificent tree, which received the assiduous care of the gardener, and the emperor never failed to tell me, with a smile:

'Metellus, when you have a fine tree like this, in your garden, you will be cæsar and emperor like me!'

"This tree was a very old oak, consecrated to Mars. When Vespasian's mother, Vespasia Polla, gave birth to her first child—a girl—a weak shoot grew on the same day from this tree, but was soon withered. It was an omen of the child's destiny, for she died within the year.

"Vespasia then had a son, and from the tree sprang a vigorous shoot, which caused the wonder of every one, and was interpreted as announcing a great fortune for the new-born infant. And, in fact, this child was Sabinus Major, who became Prefect of the city, and with whom commenced the fame of the Flavia race.

"'Finally, at my birth,' said the Emperor Vespasian, who narrated these wonders to me, 'the shoot that grew from the oak was so strong that it looked liked a young tree. This time,' continued the emperor, laughing, 'my poor father Petronius, who had run to his oak, could not control himself. He hastened back, breathless, to the house, crying: It is a Cæsar who is born unto me! Mother, it is a Cæsar!—Poor old Tertulla thought that her son had lost his senses. She often quizzed him about it, and yet you see, Metellus, that the tree was right.'

"I shall abridge," continued the young man "in order to come to more important facts. After the death of Vespasian and Titus, my father, through respect and affection for their memory, purchased the house where he had so often enjoyed the intimacy of these two great men. The Emperor Domitian did not like to preserve a villa which reminded him too much of his low origin. You are aware, my lord, that about that time Domitian was accused of having poisoned his brother, whom he had, nevertheless, placed among the gods; and it is certain that what had taken place at the death of Vespasian to whom he attempted to succeed, proves with what impatience he must have borne the reign of Titus . . . "

"Take care, young man!" said Vibius gravely; "such accusations are dangerous in these times, and you would do wisely in not repeating them!"

"I know it, my lord," replied Metellus, "but I must speak of them, since I have been accused of originating them, together with other reports, and that this was what caused my condemnation."

"Finally," he resumed; "having reached the age when it

became necessary to complete my education, my father sent me to Rome to attend the public schools, and to listen to the teaching of the orators and philosophers. Meanwhile, he remained at his house in Reata, which he seldom left, for he despised the abject life of Domitian's court and feared its perils.

"Now commenced a bright and happy period in my existence; I lived in the intimacy of the most charming minds and joyous companions; but this was of short duration. My father's frequent letters were filled with sad details and gloomy forebodings. He spoke of a growing state of discontent among the slaves, of attempts at revolt which it had been found necessary to put down by force, of threatening rumors, and of plots reported daily by reliable persons.

"I must not omit to mention, my lord, that a short time before my departure, Lucius Metellus had purchased from a slave dealer who had called at our house, a few slaves destined to agricultural labors of some importance which my father had undertaken with a view to the improvement of his new property. Among these slaves was one named Phædria, whom I would recognize amidst a thousand, if I could ever find him.

"This Phædria enjoyed perfect health, and his uncommon strength and stalwart frame made him eminently fit for the arduous labor of the husbandman. He seemed, moreover, to possess an experience in such matters which would relieve Metellus to a certain extent of the cares of personal surveillance. But, at the same time, Phædria inspired one at first sight with an unaccountable feeling of fear and repulsion, from which I could not defend myself when I met him for the first time. His look was treacherous, and the assumed submissiveness and servility of his manner ill-disguised the native brutality and audaciousness of his nature.

"I watched him closely during several days, and my apprehensions acquired a new strength. I spoke to my father about it, and urged him to get rid of this man; but he replied that my suspicions were without foundation, and moreover, he could easily check any attempt at insubordination. On the day of my departure from home I insisted again on this subject and communicated to my father new facts that had come under my observation; but it was in

vain. My father had got used to this man; he found him useful, and did not believe him dangerous. He therefore persisted in his resolution to keep him.

"Soon after my arrival in Rome, I commenced to receive those letters which gave me so much uneasiness, but my father, far from complaining of Phædria, was enthusiastic in his praise of him, and laughed at my fears. But he confided to me that he could not account for the insubordinate dispositions of his slaves; that he was threatened, and felt himself surrounded by a continual espionage, of which he could neither comprehend the motive or discover the object.

"Finally, I received a letter containing such alarming facts, and so full of bitter complaints, that I judged my father's situation intolerable, and I resolved to hasten to his assistance. I left Rome that very evening, on horseback, and accompanied by a single slave. We travelled all night and towards the middle of the next day I arrived at the place where should have been my father's house, the former villa of Vespasian and Titus. I use this doubtful expression purposedly, my lord, for my first thought was that I had lost my way, or that an inimical divinity wanted to deceive me by false appearances.

"I was standing in the middle of a vast plain; the soil around me was naked and as level as if the plow had passed over it. In the distance I could recognize all the familiar sites of the neighboring country, which convinced me that I was on our land; but there remained not a vestige of the house; the omen tree which stood so high and whose branches extended so far, had disappeared. If I was not the victim of a hideous dream, if I really stood on my father's land, it was evident that everything had been devastated, swept away, leaving nothing but a fearful wilderness.

"But then, what had become of my father? . . . At this thought, my lord, I felt my heart breaking! I shut my eyes and with a cry of anguish I fell on the barren soil!

"When I opened my eyes," resumed the young man, who had paused, overcome by his emotion, "I saw a slight cloud of smoke rising from the spot where our house had stood; and, standing in the middle of the plain, a man who had answered my cry. It was Sositheus, an old freedman who had played with my father in boyhood and taken care of

my infancy! He was mourning over the smoking ruins of our home!

"Sositheus! Sositheus!" I cried from afar, "where is my father? in the name of the gods, where is he?"

"And I heard him reply that my father was no more, and that Phædria had murdered him during the night that preceded my departure from Rome."

Metellus paused, overwhelmed by these sorrowful reminiscences. Vibius was silent and grave. The Grand Vestal wept with Metellus, and pressed his trembling hands with emotion.

"Sositheus," resumed the young man when he had recovered his composure, "told me in a few words the particulars of this mysterious and dreadful catastrophe. He was absent when it occurred, my father having sent him away on some important business, a few days previous. On his return he had found the place as I now saw it. But he learned that our slaves, two hundred in number, incited to revolt, had suddenly attacked the house, armed with fire and sword! Phædria led them; Phædria excited them to bloodshed; it was Phædria who plunged a knife in the heart of my father, who murdered the poor defenceless old man!

"Everything was destroyed, scattered or burnt by those two hundred demons, whose rage seemed to accrue as the work of destruction progressed. A tempest sweeping over those fields, the breath of the gods seeking their annihilation could not have made the work of desolation more complete. Nothing was left standing! not a stone, not a tree! nothing! nothing but the silence of death!"

"But," asked Vibius, seeing that that the young man stopped, "could you discover no clue to the cause of this terrible event? What became of all those slaves? What was this Phædria's fate?"

"The greater number of those wretches came back to implore my forgiveness, and to beseech me, with tears, to grant them life. I consented, for how could I punish when so many were guilty? But none of them could reveal to me the real cause of my father's murder and of the terrible disaster of that eventful night. I have recaptured, one after another, all the slaves who had not surrendered themselves.

I used tortures to make them confess, . . . but among all these men, some of whom had been spared by my indulgence and the others had felt my just severity, not one was found who could throw a light on this dark deed! I found in them only poor wretches excited to pillage by the hope of freedom, and led to crime by those cruel instincts unknown to our souls, but which boil over suddenly, in the mire of those abject natures.

"As for Phædria, whose perfidious schemes and murderous object all had confirmed, I have searched Rome and Italy, during six months, to wreak upon him my rage and just vengeance, but I have failed to obtain the least clue to his whereabouts!"

"All this is strange and terrible!" said Vibius who seemed plunged in deep thought.

"My lord, will you know my secret opinion?" asked Metellus.

"Well," he continued, reading assent in the old man's eyes, "these things happened at the time Domitian proclaimed himself a god and had his golden statue erected in the capitol. I am convinced that the disaster at the villa where Vespasian and Titus were born, was ordered to destroy the testimony of his plebeian origin written on its walls; that Phædria was the instrument of Regulus, and Regulus the infamous agent of Domitian's secret wishes!"

"Oh! young man! young man!" exclaimed Vibius. "But, why then, this murder of your father?"

"And why the son's condemnation?" replied Metellus. "For you have yet to learn, my lord, what happened to me. I was hunting up Phædria," he continued, "when I found myself all at once assailed by the most singular accusations. It was alleged that I was the author of the reports I have already alluded to, and which were circulated in Rome, concerning the sudden death of the Emperor Titus; and, moreover, that it was I who sought to throw the power of the emperor into discredit, by repeating to every one that his ancestor was only a poor undertaker of public works. I protested against these allegations; but I was told—which is very significant—that I had got this story from my father, who had himself propagated it in Phalacrina and Reata.

"One evening, as I was returning home, I was assailed by

a cohort, dragged before a judge, and tried and sentenced, on that same night. I was marching in the midst of an escort of soldiers, to meet my fate, when But," said the young man turning to the Vestal, with eyes beaming with gratitude, "it is you, not I, who should inform Vibius of what then took place."

"It was a very simple occurrence," said Cornelia, "and I claim no particular merit for acting as I did. You know, my lord, that one of our most ancient and indisputable privileges, is to pardon any citizen on his way to be executed, provided we can declare that we met him accidentally. The full exercise of this right is particularly guaranteed to the Grand-Vestal. No sentence of death, even if decreed by the emperor, can be executed when the lictor who proceeds her has extended his fasces over the condemned man's head.

"At an early hour on the morning of the calends of May, of last year, I was returning in my litter, from the Consul's house, where I had presided during the night at the mysteries of the Good Goddess, to the *Atrium Regium*, when, at the angle of the *Sacred Way* and the Forum, I met the escort which accompanied Metellus. My lictor cried aloud: "The Grand Vestal!" and extended his fasces towards the soldiers, who immediately halted. I asked the centurion whither he was taking this man, for I did not know Metellus. He replied that he was taking him to the *Tullanium* by order of the emperor.

"Young man, you are free," said I to Metellus, and I made the prescribed declaration to the centurion.

"This is all I have done for Metellus. It is much, since I saved his life, but it is little, since it only required a few words. And" added the Vestal, with a caressing look at the young man, "it is nothing, for who knows how Metellus repaid his debt."

"You forget, dear Cornelia," remarked Metellus, "that Regulus having sought to have me re-arrested during the day, pretending that you had no right to pardon me, you claimed me from Domitian himself, and the emperor dared not forget the duty of the Great Pontiff!

"Having avoided this danger," continued Metellus, "I soon fell into another. Regulus was not the man to give up the victim who had once escaped from his clutch. It is clear,

my lord, that the wretch had been instrumental in my condemnation, for, otherwise, why should he have attempted to deny an indisputable prerogative? I am right in my suspicions, and my poor father was likewise the victim of an accusation, the principle of which is to be found in the facts I have alluded to. There can be no doubt of this.

"Having failed in this first attempt, my enemies seek new means to injure me. But this time their object is twofold. They wish to destroy not me alone, but also her to whose intervention I owed my safety. The Grand-Vestal saved Metellus; she must perish with Metellus! Oh! this is dreadful! . . . What more shall I say, my lord? I soon discovered that an implacable hatred was seeking to work out this atrocious revenge. Naturally, Cornelia had become, and is still for me the object of a pious worship and of a gratitude which will forever fill my heart. Well! they have calumniated these noble sentiments and given them the most odious interpretations. So great were the suspicions thus aroused and so perfidiously woven the web, that I had to leave Rome and to condemn myself to live in complete solitude. Yes, my lord, such has been my life for near a year past. I had selected an unknown and almost inaccessible retreat, and these accusations were hushed by my absence. But I heard of the Grand-Vestal's sorrows, I hastened back to Rome, to devote myself to her for whom I would give my life, and at the first step I am again beset by this secret persecution . . . I am denounced!"

"Young man," said Vibius solemnly, when Metellus had ceased speaking; "you asked my advice, . . . here it is! Leave Rome instantly, return to your hiding-place. Should it not be safe enough, burrow, if necessary, in the bowels of the earth, but hide, try to be forgotten! This is all I can say to you."

"I shall do it!" exclaimed Metellus. "Yes, I shall go! but not until I have ascertained whether a man whom Sositheus followed yesterday, and whom he saw enter one of the taverns of the *Villa Publica*, is not Phædria, my father's murderer, the victim I demand of heaven and hell since two years past!"

"Good-bye," said Vibius, addressing the Vestal and Metellus. "You have heard and understood me! Reflect and act!"

And the cautious old courtier left the room, muttering to himself:

"By Minerva! one must have prudence! Let us keep clear of these dangerous mysteries! I have got enough already with my unlucky jest about the flies!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE CÆSARS AND THE DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE.

WHILST Metellus was narrating his story to Vibius, the divine Aurelia had given orders to send up to her the new slave she had purchased.

"I shall soon see," she thought, "whether I must sacrifice this young girl to I don't know what exigencies?"

Cecilia was introduced into the *cubiculum* where her mistress awaited her coming. The poor child had scarcely recovered from the sufferings she had borne during several months, and from the cruel emotions she had felt during the act of mancipation which separated her forever from her father and her lover, from all who cared for her.

She knew not whose slave she had become, but surmised from Aurelia's magnificent cortege and the splendors of her house, that she must be a wealthy patrician. But she had often heard speak of the refined barbarity of the matrons towards the unfortunate creatures who waited upon them, and she could not help fearing that God had destined her for new trials. She approached Aurelia with respectful deference, but with such evident fear that the latter could not fail to notice it.

"Come nearer," said kindly the noble girl, placed so high by fate and who was moved by the appearance of the charming creature whom fortune had made her slave; "come, I am not a very terrible mistress."

Encouraged by the caressing tone of this sweet voice, Cecilia raised her eyes, and she thanked God in her heart, when she saw the gentle face of Domitian's niece.

"What is your name?" inquired the divine Aurelia.

"Cecilia, madam," replied the young girl humbly, but without fear this time.

"Say that you have not come here to betray me!" said Aurelia abruptly, and looking her slave full in the face.

"What do you mean, madam?" exclaimed Cecilia, who drew back involuntarily, so surprised she was at this strange question. "I, betray you! . . . "

"Oh! I knew that could not be!" said the young patrician, noticing the spontaneous movement and evident surprise of the slave. "Let us see, however," she added, remembering the remarks of Vibius. "What did that horrible Regulus say to you when I took you away?"

"Regulus? . . . Regulus?" repeated Cecilia, astonished and hesitating. "Who is he?"

The young girl did not know her torturer's name.

"Regulus, who stood near the slave-dealer who sold you."

"Ah! . . . his name is Regulus . . . Well, madam, he told me I should be free as soon as I would obey him."

"And what is it you must do, to obey him?"

"I must denounce my benefactors, Flavia Domitilla and Flavius Clemens."

"Flavia Domitilla and Flavius Clemens!" cried the divine Aurelia, at the height of astonishment. "What do you say? my relations! . . ."

"Your relations!" repeated Cecilia with as much surprise.

"Yes, my relations! Are you not then aware that I am the emperor's niece?"

"No madam," replied the young slave simply.

There was a pause. The divine Aurelia was plunged in thought. She knew already that Regulus was trying to ascertain the afiliation of her family with the worship of Christ, in order, doubtless, to inform the emperor. What surprised her was the boldness of this new attempt, and the still stranger fact that Cecilia should have such intimate acquaintance with Flavia Domitilla and Flavius Clemens, as to have acquired the right of styling them her benefactors.

"How did you come to know my relations?" she asked.

"Madam, previous to my misfortune, I saw Flavia Domitilla every day, and I had the honor of receiving a daughter's welcome in the consul's house."

"Indeed! and how did this come to happen?"

But instead of replying to this question, Cecilia looked down, embarrassed and silent. To explain the cause of her intimacy with that noble family, would be to reveal the secrets for which she had suffered all the tortuers inflicted by Regulus. It is true that the divine Aurelia had spoken of her relationship with Flavia Domitilla and Flavius Clemens; but was this sufficient for Cecilia to forget the rules of prudence which made it her duty not to divulge the names of her brethren in the religion of Christ?

The divine Aurelia remarked her slave's hesitation and felt offended; but she also suspected the motive of her silence.

"Can it be that you are a Christian?" she asked, and there was a certain bitterness in her voice.

"Yes, madam, I am a Christian," replied Cecilia, who could not suspect what a revelation this simple word contained.

"You are a Christian! Ah! I understand now? But I am not an informer!" cried Aurelia in a tone of reproach. Then a suspicion flashed to her mind:

"How does it happen," she added, "that you are a slave if Flavia Domitilla protected you?"

"I was sold by my father, without Flavia Domitilla's knowledge."

"By your father!" exclaimed the divine Aurelia. "But this is dreadful! Ah! I remember now, it was written on the ticket of sale that you are of free condition. It is then true?"

"Yes, madam."

"And your father sold you! A father may then sell his daughter?"

"It seems so, madam, since the judges have declared that it could be done."

"The judges! What! judges have said this? But, were you not defended by Pliny-the-Younger?" asked Aurelia, remembering what Vibius had said.

"I do not know, madam. I know that I was brought before the Pretor, that I saw there my father, my betrothed, and other friends who claimed me. I know also that this man you call Regulus came to tell me, some time after, that there was no hope for me and I was really his slave.

But whether or not I was defended by Pliny-the-Younger, I cannot say."

"However, you must be the same young girl of whom Vibius spoke has having been adjudicated to Regulus under Parmenon's name, and sold to me by Parmenon! Poor child! Poor child!" repeated Aurelia, gazing with compassionate tenderness on the young slave." But why did your father sell you? How you must hate him!"

"Hate him! Oh! no, madam! My father was very unhappy, and he thought he was pleasing his gods!"

"Your father then sacrificed you because you are a Christian? But you should have abjured your creed, and he would not have sold you!"

"Doubtless, madam, I could have saved myself by this means. But we should not thus abjure our faith!"

"What! even at the price of liberty?"

"At the price of liberty and even of life!" replied Cecilia in a firm voice.

Admiration was succeeding to curiosity in Aurelia's soul.

"Your religion is then very beautiful and very true, that it should inspire such sacrifices?" she asked with emotion.

"Madam, when one is a Christian, one can bear everything, for the reward is above!" replied Cecilia, pointing to heaven.

"You speak like my cousin Flavia Domitilla," remarked Aurelia, with a smile. "She told me the same things when she sought to convert me to her faith. Do not try to conceal anything from me.

"I know that my cousin is a Christian: I know that Flavius Clemens belongs to your religion. Yes, all this has been told me," added the noble girl thoughtfully; "but I confess that I did not believe the Christians could be so faithful to their God! What surprises me, however, is that Flavia Domitilla should have left you in the power of that Parmenon. It seems to me she is rich enough to have satisfied the greed of both Parmenon and Regulus."

"If she has not done so, it is because she could not," replied the young girl, who was not aware of the immense offers made by the pious matron. "But," she added, after a moment's reflection, "have you not told me that Pliny-the-Younger defended me in this suit? This Pliny is a great

lawyer, I have heard him spoken of frequently. Do you think that a poor girl like me, that my father, who has nothing, could have secured the services of such a defender, if some high influence had not protected us?"

"That is true!" said the divine Aurelia, "you are right. So," she resumed, following another train of thought, "this man Regulus wanted you to obey him, that is, I suppose, to reveal that my relations are Christians?"

Cecilia made no reply.

"Cecilia! . . . Cecilia! do you not see that I know all? Why again this silence? You refused to obey Regulus, did you not?"

"You have said it, madam."

"But he was your master. And I am told he is a very wicked man."

Cecilia was again silent; but no longer from the same motive. The heroic child did not wish to make known the greatness of her sacrifice.

The divine Aurelia had a revelation of this Christian feeling of generosity. She understood all this poor slave must have suffered for resisting the will of a pitiless master. She walked slowly to the young girl, and pulling down the simple tunic she wore, laid bare her bosom and shoulders.

A cry of horror escaped from Aurelia's lips.

Long scars, scarcely healed—the hideous proofs of the torturer's cruelty and the victim's constancy—spread their dark furrows in every direction on the delicate skin of the young Christian.

The poor child hung down her head, in confusion, and dared not raise her eyes. The blushes which involuntarily covered her pale and sickly face, told her embarrassment.

The divine Aurelia studied during an instant this candid physiognomy, upon which the virginal graces of her own age were blended with the traces of cruel sufferings; then, unable to resist her emotion, and following the impulse of her heart, she threw herself, all in tears, in Cecilia's arms, and pressed her young slave lovingly on her throbbing bosom.

"You see, Cecilia," cried the amiable girl, forgetful of her patrician pride, "I love you! Oh yes, I love you! for, I see it now, you have suffered for the sake of those who are dear to me, and you have saved them! . . . But, I swear

it, your troubles are over now! I swear it by your God . . and by mine!"

And seizing Cecilia's hand, she hurried with her through the *atrium*. Vibius Crispus had just come out of Cornelia's room.

"Why, Vibius! Vibius! where are you going to, my dear guardian?" cried the divine Aurelia, perceiving the unfortunate courtier who, plunged in deep thought, was crossing the atrium. "What! I need you, and you are going away."

Vibius hastened to cast off the anxious thoughts which clouded his brow, and turned, smiling with paternal fondness:

"Am I not always at the command of my august ward?" he said, approaching respectfully.

"Follow me, my dear Vibius," replied Aurelia.

And still holding Cecilia's hand, she went, followed by Vibius, to the room where Cornelia and Metellus Celer were still conversing.

"Here is," she cried, as they entered, "the young girl I purchased to-day. I have interrogated her, and you will see whether she is a spy sent by Regulus."

Still under the impression of the compassionate emotion which had filled her naturally generous heart at the discovery of Cecilia's sufferings, Aurelia made a passionate narrative of what had passed between her and the young slave, and asked her horrified hearers what they thought of the poor child.

The Grand-Vestal's only reply was to draw the bashful young Christian to her and kiss her forehead.

Neither Vibius Crispus, nor Metellus Celer expressed any surprise at the admiration shown by Aurelia for her humble slave, or at the tender caresses lavished upon her by the Grand-Vestal, whose eyes were filled with tears of sympathy.

"My dear Vibius," resumed the divine Aurelia, "this is not all; I want to give Cecilia her freedom. She was not born to be my slave, and I would reproach myself if I kept her away from her friends. Moreover, it is a gift I wish to make to my cousin, Flavia Domitilla."

"Certainly, my dear ward; but this is no easy matter . ."

"Why so, if you please! Am I not the mistress?"

"Yes and no, divine Aurelia."

"What do you mean Vibius?"

"Why, first, there is the Ælia Sentia law, which does not permit masters under twenty years of age to liberate their slaves; and, then, there is Regulus . . ."

"Regulus! again that name!" exclaimed Aurelia impatiently.

"Yes, Regulus, who could again lay his hand on this young girl, if she were set free in violation of the clause which prohibits her manumission."

"Very well," said the divine Aurelia ironically, "this man Regulus will prove more powerful than I, who am the betrothed of Vespasian, the cæsar and future emperor of the Romans! . . . You are speaking in jest, guardian!"

Vibius Crispus did not have time to frame an answer. As the young girl pronounced her cousin's name, a slave appeared at the door, and, bowing low, announced in a loud voice:

"The Cæsar Vespasian."

The young man entered, accompanied by a stranger whose venerable and holy features inspired respect.

"Ah! my dear cousin, how happy I am to see you!" exclaimed the artless Aurelia, springing into Vespasian's arms. "It is so long since I have had this happiness. Vibius can tell you that I went to-day to Pompey's portico in the hope of meeting you, . . . for no other motive. I wished so much to speak to you!"

"Indeed, dear cousin," replied the young man, who returned Aurelia's caresses, with marks of sincere affection; "and I also, wished to speak to you! . . I come to see you concerning this child," he added, pointing to Cecilia; "I come, accompanied by the Supreme Pontiff of the Christians, to claim her from your generosity. . ."

"Ah!" exclaimed simultaneously Aurelia and her guests, their looks wandering from Cecilia to the Pontiff, and from the latter to Vespasian, as if to ask what tie could exist between three persons differing so widely in rank and station.

Aurelia, although better informed of certain circumstances which enabled her to understand, to a certain extent, this unexpected reclamation, waited anxiously for her cousin to explain his connection with it. Knowing that Cecilia was a Christian and protected by her relations, she would have felt no surprise had Flavia Domitilla come to claim her; but not being aware that, like all his family, her betrothed, Vespa-

sian, had embraced the religion of Christ, she could not comprehend the motives for which he had been intrusted with this negotiation.

And, in fact, we owe some explanations to the reader on this subject.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTIAN PRIEST AND THE PAGAN VIRGIN.

YOUNG Flavius, the son of Flavius Clemens and Flavia Domitilla, and named Vespasian by Domitian when the latter raised him and his brother to the dignity of Cæsars, was a little older than the divine Aurelia, for he was in his eighteenth year.

He was a hopeful youth, with a noble, proud, and impetuous disposition, and withal gifted with rare modesty and moderation. Quintilian, the learned tutor of the two young princes, took much pains to form their minds, and in Vespasian, especially, he had found a ready and willing pupil. This young Cæsar had devoted himself principally to the study of eloquence; notwithstanding the high rank to which he was destined, his ambition was to excel in this most difficult of sciences, which the Romans held in such high esteem.

The young man had perfectly understood that he must strive to acquire distinction without awakening the jealous suspicions of the emperor, and he had sought it in the study of letters. By this prudent course he had succeeded in gaining Domitian's affection, so far, at least, as the latter's nature was susceptible of feeling love. The two brothers would have been well satisfied to live like simple citizens, enjoying merely the honor due to their rank: the emperor, therefore, was satisfied with his choice, which disarmed other ambitions, and he continued to show his nephews much favor.

Vespasian and Aurelia loved each other from childhood, and they had been betrothed even before Domitian had made any dispositions to leave the empire to the sons of Flavius Clemens. These two lovers, equally gifted by nature, were

of totally different characters. Vespasian, as we have said, had that pride common to all Roman patricians, but tempered by a greatness of mind which made it a lofty virtue. Aurelia looked upon her high rank as the greatest of privileges, and her vanity did not always preserve her from the little weaknesses which generally accompany this secret infirmity of the most amiable minds. Dazzled by the prospect of the honors which awaited her, she often gave way to the capricious independence of supreme power.

Flavia Domitilla, whose ardent zeal had met with so much success among the members of her family, had sought to convert her young cousin to the religion of Christ; but christianity and the empire were so incompatible at that time, that the patrician girl who saw in a change of religion the ruin of her magnificent hopes, had rejected with supreme contempt the overtures made by the pious matron.

Things had gone so far, that it was deemed expedient to conceal from the divine Aurelia the fact that her betrothed had deserted the creed of which the emperors were sovereign pontiffs, for fear that her regrets and complaints should reach Domitian's ears. The imperious and frivolous girl, who loved her kindred with the passionate affection of a generous heart, had, however, sought to punish them for their repeated attempts to convert her, and we have already learned from Palæstrion's conversation with Regulus, that for some time past, she had ceased holding intercourse with them.

But now she had bought Cecilia; the good news reached Flavia Domitilla, who hailed it as a happy omen. Yet, how could she see the young patrician after their quarrel? How could Aurelia be asked in the name of Christ, whom she had refused to know, to give up a young girl whom her vanity would doubtless counsel her to keep.

It was difficult for Flavia Domitilla and Flavius Clemens, who knew nothing of the secret dispositions of Aurelia, to intervene personally in this circumstance. And yet, it was important to seize an opportunity which might not present itself again.

As they were discussing anxiously this question, Vespasian came up with Clemens, the Christian Bishop, who had become the successor of Peter, Anacletus having recently died. Clemens, it is said, was connected with the imperial family.

We merely mention the fact—it adds nothing to his merit or his virtues.

The young cæsar and the pontiff learned from Flavia Domitilla what had occurred, and the embarrassment in which she was, how to proceed.

"But," said Vespasian, "Aurelia cannot be angry with me."

"Cecilia is our child," added Clemens, who knew the young girl, and had been informed how she had glorified the name of Christ. "It behooves me to claim her, and to show to your young relation that, the Christians being brothers, we owe our first care to those who suffer. God will inspire me the words I must speak, and perhaps this child, so rebellious to divine grace, may at last be moved."

"You will probably meet the Grand-Vestal there," remarked Flavia Domitilla. "I know that she has been living with Aurelia for some time past."

"Well," replied the priest, with a smile, "the Grand-Vestal will learn that the pontiff of the Christians watches over the virgins confided to his care, not to chastise them as Helvius Agrippa does, but to return them to freedom and happiness when they have fallen into slavery. Do you think, pious matron, that this contrast will be useless?"

So it happened that Vespasian and Clemens made their appearance in the Grand-Vestal's apartment, at Aurelia's, when they were the least expected.

A silent pause had followed Vespasian's words. The young cæsar reading in Aurelia's eyes the desire that he should explain his demand, resumed:

"Yes, my dear Aurelia, our relation, Flavia Domitilla, whose envoys we are, hopes that she will obtain from you the release of this young girl, her sister in the faith of Christ."

"Madam," added the pontiff, in a gentle and penetrating voice, "I am the first pastor of an unhappy and desolate flock, and when one of my lambs groans and suffers, I run to save it. This is why I have come to you! . ."

"My dear Vespasian, and you my lord," replied Aurelia, anxious to show her good dispositions, "you will tell Flavia Domitilla that I, whom she accuses of having no pity"—and she showed the letter received that day, and with which we have already made the reader acquainted—"I have forestalled

her wishes, and here, in this very room, as you came in, I was proposing to emancipate Cecilia."

"That is true," said Vibius, the Vestal and Metellus Celer.

"Yes, madam," added Cecilia softly, "yes, I attest it also; you wanted to return me to my friends! Ah! I shall never forget it!"

"Wait, dear Vespasian," resumed Aurelia, stopping the words of thanks on the young man's lips, "wait! This is certainly what I wanted and what I still wish, but it seems that it is not possible! . . . "

"How is that," exclaimed together the pontiff and the young cæsar, with undisguised anxiety; for they knew what obstacles had prevented Cecilia's deliverance, and they were fearful of new difficulties.

"Here is Vibius, my guardian, who will try to explain the matter to you," replied Aurelia. "As for me, I cannot understand anything about it," she added, all her impatience returning at the thought of this opposition to her will.

Vibius Crispus gave, in a few words, the two reasons which, in his opinion, might defeat the generous intentions of his august ward.

"Are these the only obstacles?" remarked Clemens. "It seems to me that, with prudence, they might be easily overcome."

"That's it! that's it!" exclaimed Aurelia impetuously. "Vibius, my dear guardian, you will call immediately on Pliny-the-Younger, in my name. . . But there is something still more serious! . ."

And without observing her hearer's astonishment, she added:

"My dear Vespasian, do you know why I wish this young girl to be free? Ah! it is because there exists an infamous wretch, one named Regulus, who has sworn the ruin of my relations, and who spies their secrets. And Cecilia, who could have gained her freedom by denouncing them as Christians, preferred to submit to the most cruel treatment rather than obey that man."

"Glory to God!" exclaimed the Pontiff gazing with emotion on the young Christian who had twice suffered for His name. "My daughter, you are great among us, for I see the halo of the martyr's crown already on your brow.

Blessed be you! . . And you also, madam, since your heart is noble enough to understand and reward this courage!"

"O dear Aurelia," said the young cæsar, pressing her hand, "thanks! a thousand thanks in the name of all that are dear to me!"

"Madam," resumed Clemens, "you said that Regulus wishes to know who we are. Regulus can easily satisfy his curiosity. Let him come to me and I will reveal to him what he styles our secrets."

"Yet, my lord," said Aurelia, "you praised Cecilia because she refused to speak."

"Have you not said, madam, that they wanted her to betray your relations? I have justly admired this young girl who, at the price of liberty, refused to betray her brethren when some danger existed . . . but I do not believe that the knowledge of our secrets could serve the designs of our enemies."

"Madam," continued the Pontiff, remarking the silent attention of his hearers, "and you, my lords, let me tell you what are these Christians and their mysteries, and you will say whether we deserve the hatred which people bear us!

"The strangest slanders are circulated against us, and we are even accused of the most horrible crimes. The least prejudiced believe that our religion is vain and indecent, and I have heard, among other absurdities, that they laugh at our veneration for the consecrated head of an ass or a hog! Are not these," he added, addressing Vibius and Metellus, "the stories you have heard?"

Metellus and Vibius replied that they had often heard of this ridiculous worship.

"Do they not allege that, in our assemblies, a young child, covered with flour in order to deceive the eye and to disguise the horror of the crime, is put to death by other children trained to inflict secret wounds; and that the priest divides the bleeding and palpitating limbs among the Christians, who drink of this blood and eat of this flesh, swearing by this abominable pact mutual fidelity and eternal silence?"

"Yes," replied Vibius Crispus and Metellus Celer. "Such are the accusations brought against the Christians."

"O religion of Christ! O holy repasts of my brethren! O assemblies of the elect!" exclaimed the Pontiff, "why

have error and falsehood disfigured our sacred ceremonies and calumniated the mysteries of divine love? Ah! is it not evident that these accusations are an excuse for those feasts of the Good Goddess, from which the Vestals withdraw horrified; for those abominations of the *Quinquatria* of Minerva; for those human sacrifices of Jupiter-Latiarus and of the days of Mars and Bellona; for those impious conjurations when cups of blood are drunk with enthusiasm; for those detestable religious feasts where the flesh of human victims is partaken of as a wholesome and agreeable food! . ."

"But, my lord," remarked Vibius, interrupting the Pontiff, "you honor the cross! It is, they affirm, the sign and foundation of your creed!"

Vibius, who could say nothing to contradict facts too patent to be denied, had found this grave objection.

"Yes, we honor the cross," replied the priest, with respectful and saintly animation, "yes, the cross is the great symbol and the sacred sign of the redemption we have come to announce! This surprises you? Oh! I can understand that it should! Rome cannot so suddenly lower her pride before the hated instrument of the slave's punishment! She must fear that which is the hope of those who suffer, and the condemnation of those who oppose! But the times have commenced when the cross shall speak to the world of charity and justice, of truth and love, of the strength and wisdom which are unknown to it. The cross will teach the world that all men are brothers, by the spectacle of a God suffering ignominious death to save alike the master and the slave. It will cause to bud forth, everywhere, holiness of life, and that voluntary chastity, the glory of our virgins, which Rome could never obtain from the unhappy victims, torn since childhood from the joys of the family and condemned to an unwilling sacrifice, except through the terror of the most fearful punishment!"

This allusion to the fate of the Grand-Vestal—so transparent and rendered so solemn by her present circumstances—caused those who listened to the pontiff's words to shudder with painful emotion.

Cornelia raised her eyes, so expressively sad, to the speaker, and as her glance met that of the priest, beaming with loving compassion, her features expressed a strange bitterness.

"Here are," resumed Clemens, "all the mysteries of Christianity! Here is what I am charged to teach my brethren in our holy assemblies! Here is what I can reveal to Regulus, if he wishes to know what takes place among us! Do you think, my lords, that our religion is a cloak for fearful crimes, and that we can have much to fear from this man's denunciations? . . ."

And, as no reply was made, he proceeded:

"At all events, we know how to suffer! Persecutions may afflict us; we shall accept them, glorifying God's holy name, and forgiving our enemies. Vibius, you have seen, in Nero's time, that Christians do not fear tortures; and this young girl has proved what strength is found in the spirit of God! Doubtless, hearts will still remain closed, for a long time, against the thoughts of mercy, the words of love, the principles of justice which our brethren alone can understand; but, at least, when they will have seen the Christians die, they will find it difficult to believe that so much courage and so great a contempt for life could be met in men guilty of the atrocities we have been accused of committing! Blood, if it is shed, will testify to the sanctity of our morals; it will become the fruitful germ from which thousands of new Christians will spring forth!"

"My lord," said Aurelia, deeply moved, "I want Cecilia to be in your midst, to-morrow! Vibius, my dear guardian, this must be, do you hear?"

Vibius bowed respectfully, and promised to his august ward, that her wishes would be complied with, immediately.

"Good bye, dear Vespasian," said the young girl to her betrothed, who was following Clemens. "Will not my relations consent to come here? . . ."

"Dear Aurelia," exclaimed the young man, "my father, my mother, Flavia Domitilla, all those who love you will be filled with joy! And I will rejoice too, for your heart sympathizes with ours. You will see us again, soon! . . ."

"Oh!" sighed the young girl, as she gazed pensively on the retreating form of her betrothed; but she added not a word to this exclamation coming from the depth of her troubled heart.

Vibius Crispus and Metellus Celer took leave of the two maidens, and withdrew. Aurelia called her nurse, and

placed Cecilia in the faithful woman's care. Then, when she found herself alone with her who had been the guide of her childhood, and whom she loved as a mother, she threw herself in her arms and wept silently . . .

"Cornelia," said she, at last, "Vespasian is a Christian! All my dreams of happiness are ended!"

"Dear child," said the Grand-Vestal, pressing the weeping girl to her heart;" this priest is great! . . . And this religion very beautiful! . . . Oh! if I were not what I am! . . . I also, have nothing left but fearful despair in my heart! . . . Metellus! Metellus! . . . O implacable divinity! . . . The monsters! they will sacrifice us both! . . ."

Aurelia understood that there was here a still more bitter sorrow than her own, and suppressing her sobs, she embraced the vestal and left her to her sad reflections.

CHAPTER XV.

PHÆDRIA.

CECILIA'S emancipation was merely an act of bodily release, since, being ingenuous or free born, she had become a slave only by legal fiction; yet, it presented grave difficulties, as Vibius Crispus had foreseen.

There was first the Ælia Sentia law, which prohibited the emancipation by a minor, unless there was just cause to permit the act. This just or legal cause depended upon various circumstances, seldom found united, and had besides, to be submitted to a council presided by the Pretor with the assistance of five senators and five knights.

Aurelia had not yet attained the legal age—twenty years,—and no cause existed for her action, which could be admitted as just in law.

The clause of non-emancipation specified by Parmenon, formed another serious obstacle. It could not hinder Aurelia from relinquishing her rights on the slave she had purchased, but it permitted Parmenon to replace his hand on Cecilia, the moment she should become free through the voluntary act of her mistress.

Pliny-the-Younger, upon being consulted by Vibius, attached importance only to this second difficulty; the first appearing to him as a means of protection in case the slave-dealer should vindicate his rights.

"One of the two things," he said to Vibius; "either Parmenon will claim the girl on the strength of this clause, or he will remain silent. This last hypothesis seems the most probable, for Regulus, however great his audacity, will not dare to contend openly, before the pretor, against the power of the divine Aurelia, strengthened moreover by the influence of all her relations.

"But I suppose the slave-dealer should interfere, well! to prevent him from recovering possession of Cecilia, you will, yourself, in your quality of guardian, claim the nullity of the emancipation, as contrary to the Ælia Sentia law. The act being annulled, as I have no doubt it would be, your august ward can nevertheless carry out her generous intentions by simply permitting her slave to live in freedom, and no one will gainsay her right.

Pliny-the-Younger's advice was, therefore, that the legal emancipation should be attempted, and that it should be done in the most solemn manner, even if they had to fall back upon the very imperfect means suggested—to let Cecilia remain a slave in name, though free in fact.

Consequently, Vibius Crispus informed his ward that it was possible to manumit Cecilia, but it would be necessary that she appear before the pretor. Aurelia replied that she was perfectly willing, and fixed the sixth hour of the day for the ceremony. She requested Vibius to call on Flavius Clemens and Vespasian and ask them if they would assist her on this solemn occasion.

Flavius Clemens and Vespasian replied that it was their intention to unite themselves with their young relation in this act of generosity.

Of the several modes of manumission existing in Rome, one only, the manumission *per vindictam,* could apply to Cecilia's case, on account of Aurelia's youth. It was moreover the oldest and most solemn of these forms. On this occasion, the high rank of the mistress and the peculiar circumstances connected with the slave's history, increased the interest and added to the solemnity of the ceremony.

Aurelia entered her litter at the hour appointed, and started for the forum, with the brilliant escort we have already described when we followed her to Pompey's portico; only, instead of her women she was now accompanied by vigorous and well-armed slaves.

The young patrician was sad. Melancholy thoughts cast a cloud of gloom on her fair brow, although her eyes rested on the handsome face of Vespasian who, seated in another litter with his father, greeted her with loving smiles.

Vibius Crispus was on horseback, near his ward's litter; but he did little to dispel her sadness, for he was, himself, plunged in anxious thought. The unfortunate courtier, while compelled to obey his ward, trembled for the consequences of a struggle against Regulus. Was there not some hidden danger in this affair? What would the Emperor think when he would learn that Vibius had mingled in the enterprises of the Christians, or at least that he had helped to restore the freedom of a girl belonging to this hated sect?

He could augur nothing good from the difficult and dangerous undertaking in which he had become entangled against his will. He could scarcely disguise his irritation whenever his eyes fell on Cecilia, who walked before him escorted by some of Aurelia's waiting women.

The young girl was clad in the garb of a slave, required by the circumstances, and which she must wear until, the pretor's wand having been extended over her head, she would hear the solemn words which would make her free.

This dress consisted in a plain tunic of coarse woollen stuff, descending a little below the knee, and fastened around the waist with a narrow belt: But she wore on her head a small cap, insignia of the freedom she was going to obtain.

Aurelia would have liked to spare the young girl the humiliation of preceding her on foot, in the midst of her pompous escort; but the imperious rules of etiquette and time consecrated usage must be obeyed, and all she could do was to commit her to the care of some of her most trusted women.

When Aurelia's cortege appeared in the Forum, an immense clamor, a cry of joy and hope, ascended from the crowd. All the friends of Cecilia had hastened to the Forum, upon

learning from the pontiff Clemens the news of her approaching release. They were mostly Jews from the neighborhood of the Capena-Gate, who crowded round Cecilius, Olinthus, and old Petronilla who had come to receive in her arms, the child that God was about to restore to her.

We shall not do our friend Gurges the injustice to forget his presence in the first rank of the multitude gathered around the pretor's court. The worthy vespillo made himself very disagreeable to his neighbors by the exhuberance of his joy, and the gestures he frequently addressed to his companions. He had brought with him his father's hired men, but merely as a measure of precaution, for he had ceased to fear Regulus, and he was ready to knock down any one who would have asserted that the vile informer could interfere. The precaution was a good one however, for Regulus was there, not far from Parmenon, and waiting to see what would occur.

Gurges was at first thunderstruck by this double apparition; but he had got over his emotion, and his anger rising as he accounted for the presence of these two ruffians, he resolved to exterminate them if they made the least hostile demonstration. This was the cause of the extraordinary excitement manifested by the worthy vespillo.

Meanwhile, Aurelia's Numidian horsemen had succeeded in forcing a passage through the dense crowd, and her litter had stopped in front of the Pretor's curule chair. The young girl stepped out, leaning on her guardian's arm, and Flavius Clemens and Vespasian took their place by her side.

The Pretor's lictors lowered their fasces, in token of respect for the consular citizen and the heir of the empire.

Cecilia was placed opposite her mistress, who, smiling kindly, placed her hand on her slave's head. Vibius Crispus could not help starting, as Aurelia performed this first act of the ceremony of manumission, for Parmenon, followed by Regulus, had approached, and almost touched him.

Gurges actually roared with rage, and sprang forward, followed by his men, to surround the slave-dealer and his companions. Olinthus imitated the vespillo's movements.

Amidst the deep silence of the anxious multitude, the Pretor asked Aurelia the motive of her appeal to justice. The young girl, her hand still resting on Cecilia's head,

replied that she had come with the intention of granting freedom to the slave who had become hers by virtue of a regular act of mancipation. She then added, in a firm and clear voice, which was heard by all the crowd:

"I want this young girl to be free!"

Having pronounced these words, she withdrew her hand from Cecilia's head. The Pretor then took a long, narrow wand which he extended over the slave's head, and giving her a slight blow on the cheek, pronounced the formula:

"I declare, young girl, that thou art free, by the law of the Quirites."

The magistrate's lictor, taking Cecilia's hand, now made her turn a complete circle and let her go—a last symbolic ceremony which meant that she was free to go where she pleased.

As Cecilia turned to spring into the friendly arms opened to receive her, Parmenon rushed forward to seize her. But the slave-dealer reckoned without Gurges, who was closely watching him, and who throwing himself between him and his victim, struck him a terrible blow in the face, which sent him rolling amidst the crowd. A thunder of applause greeted this act of vigor.

In order to explain the successful hit made by the gallant Vespillo, we must reveal the fact that Gurges to make sure of victory had slipped his hands into a pair of iron-clad leather gauntlets, not unlike the modern instrument known as "brass-knuckles," and the terrible weight of which few men could resist. The slave-dealer had fallen, bruised and bleeding, and was writhing with pain and rage, giving vent to the most fearful threats and imprecations, but unable to rise.

A scene of confusion and disorder ensued. Regulus, tearing his garments, clung to the Pretor's curule chair, and clamored loudly for justice. Meanwhile, Parmenon's people attempted to throw themselves on Gurges, and avenge their master; but Aurelia's Numidians and other armed slaves coming to the rescue with the Vespillo's companions, the slave-dealer's hirelings were compelled to fall back. Threats and furious clamors were heard on all sides, and the excited crowd seemed ready to take part in the conflict.

At last, the Pretor, Publius Aufidius Namusa, who had not deemed proper to prevent the struggle which, as we have

already stated, generally preceded such contestations for the vindication of a claim, thought that it was time to bring it to an end, and ordered his crier to proclaim silence, and his two lictors to restrain the multitude.

Order was instantly restored.

"Who is the citizen that claims justice?" demanded the crier.

"I am the man!" replied Parmenon, in a voice hoarse with pain and rage; and he dragged himself forward, with the help of two of his men.

"What do you want?" inquired the magistrate.

"I want to replace my hand on the slave who has been manumitted in violation of the express stipulation of my deed of sale."

"What clause was that?"

"That Cecilia could never be emancipated. She has been set free! Aurelia could transfer her rights to another party, but she could not give the slave her freedom. I, therefore, claim Cecilia as my property!"

"The clause is legal," said the Prætor, amidst the general anxiety. "You have the right to make this claim, and I grant it, provided it is not contested."

Vibius Crispus, assisted by Pliny-the-Younger, then stepped up, and declared that as Aurelia's guardian he made opposition to Parmenon's claim. He was proceeding to state the grounds of his opposition, when, having cast his eyes on the slave-dealer, he stopped suddenly, struck with stupor.

The extraordinary change which had taken place in Parmenon, was indeed likely to astonish any one. His features had lost their wonted expression of audacity, to assume that of excruciating anguish. In prey to the most abject fear, he trembled in all his limbs, a cold sweat oozing from the pores of his face, mingled with the blood that trickled from his wound. He was hideous to behold! gnashing his teeth and looking at Regulus with that expression of mute supplication which the human face assumes in presence of some terrible, unavoidable danger!

But Regulus, himself, seemed overwhelmed by a strange fear and dared not to raise his eyes.

A young citizen, accompanied by an old man, had silently wended his way through the crowd, and upon reaching the

Pretor's tribunal, had laid his hand heavily on Parmenon's head.

The slave-dealer turning round abruptly had seemed thunderstruck, and had fallen on his knees, upon recognizing him whose hand was thus proudly laid on him, and whose calm, penetrating and implacable gaze made him cower.

This young man was Metellus Celer, and his companion, Sositheus, the faithful freedman!

Since his arrival in Rome with his master, a few days previous, Sositheus had devoted his time to seeking some clue that would put him on the track of Lucius Metellus' murderer. He hoped that the time which had elapsed since the first investigations were made, Metellus Celer's subsequent exile, and consequently the security of impunity, might have led Phædria to return to Rome. Two days previous to the scene we are describing, Sositheus was wandering through the streets, after dark, peering into the taverns, and examining every face he met, when the sound of a voice speaking at some distance, startled him. Hastening in the direction from which the sound had come, he saw a man of tall stature leaving a house, whose door was immediately closed.

Sositheus could not see the features of this man, but his form was familiar and the faithful freedman felt his heart throb with revengeful exultation at the thought that his suspicions awakened by the voice, might prove correct. He followed the stranger who was hurrying through the dark streets, and never lost sight of him, although his aged limbs scarcely permitted him to keep up the pursuit.

After many turnings the man reached one of the taverns in the *Villa publica*, and knocked at the door, calling to those within in a voice that again caused the freedman to start. The door opened and closed upon the stranger, who had no suspicion that he had been followed. Sositheus having examined the tavern and its surroundings, in order to recognize it, sought some drinking shop in the neighborhood, where he could make inquiries without raising suspicion.

There was no scarcity of such establishments in the *Villa publica*, and the old freedman was embarrassed only in making his choice. He selected one of the most brilliant in appearance; and being decently clad and well provided with *sestertii*, he found in its owner a willing and complaisant talker.

Sositheus having described the appearance and indicated the residence of the stranger, was told that it must be one Parmenon, a slave-dealer, who did a large business and always kept a fine assortment of slaves. The inn keeper evidently held him in great esteem, and recommended him warmly to the old freedman, whom he took to be a purchaser in search of a slave-dealer.

Sositheus took good care not to undeceive him, and having obtained all the information he sought, bade him good night, promising to call again soon. The old man then hastened to join Metellus Celer, to inform him that he felt almost certain that he had discovered Phædria, concealed under the name of Parmenon and keeping a slave tavern in the *Villa publica*.

It was surely Parmenon whom Sositheus had followed; but the question was whether Parmenon and Phædria were one and the same person. Metellus Celer, who, necessarily, had to act with great circumspection, wished Sositheus to ascertain positively this fact, before taking any decisive steps.

On the next day Sositheus returned to the *Villa publica*, and found Parmenon exhibiting his slaves to the crowd. The cautious old man, concealed behind a pillar, remained for long hours scrutinizing the features of the slave-dealer—anxiously watching every muscle of that hideous face. But Parmenon was so strangely disfigured by the numerous scars which had eaten deep into the flesh, distorting every feature, that Sositheus hesitated to recognize Phædria under this inscrutable mask. It was the same voice, the same treacherous eye, the same tall form and ruffianly insolence, and yet it might not be Phædria.

Sositheus after witnessing the sale of Cecilia, returned home, wavering in his first suspicions and almost discouraged.

"Very well," remarked Metellus Celer, when his old freedman related to him these facts, "to-morrow I shall go, myself, to the *Villa publica* and, by all the gods! if that man is Phædria, I will recognize him!"

When Metellus went to the tavern, on the next day, Parmenon was not there; he was closeted with Marcus Regulus.

The informer had heard of Aurelia's projects, and ascertained the hour at which she would go to the Forum. He was, in consequence, giving his last instructions to his

accomplice and making him rehearse the part he would have to play before the Pretor.

Metellus Celer waited a long time near the tavern, hoping that the slave-dealer would return; but he finally became convinced that further delay was useless when the usual hour for the public sales was past.

"I shall come again to-morrow," said the young man. He had resolved not to leave Rome until he would have examined this clue, however vague and uncertain, by which he might possibly find his father's murderer.

He was returning by the Forum, the nearest way to Aurelia's house, where, notwithstanding the advice of Vibius Crispus, he wished to see the Grand-Vestal once more, when, at the entrance of the place he found his progress impeded by the dense crowd assembled to witness Cecilia's emancipation.

The young man recognized Aurelia's Numidian horsemen, who, mounted on their high steeds, towered above the crowd, and a cry of joy escaped his lips. Why had he not remembered it sooner? She was there to manumit Cecilia and the young slave having been bought from Parmenon, this man whom he suspected of being his father's murderer, must doubtless be present also.

Like an echo of his own exclamation, another cry rose from the midst of this multitude which hid the tribunal from his eyes. This sound which made Metellus and his faithful Sositheus start and exchange a look of triumphant hope, was the cry of pain and rage uttered by Parmenon as he fell under the dexterous blow of the valiant vespillo.

Metellus pressed forward, followed by Sositheus, the people opening their ranks before him as if they foresaw that a new incident of powerful interest was about to occur. Having reached the wide circle formed by the lictors of Aufidius Namusa, Metellus laid his hand on the slave-dealer, and in a loud voice, pronounced this single word:

"Phædria!"

The trouble of the wretch when he heard this familiar and terrible voice, and felt the contact of this sovereign hand, left no doubt in the young Roman's mind.

Concentrating in his look all the hatred and revengeful fury that filled his soul, he added, with the same terrible calmness of tone:

"Phædria, you recognize me! I have got you, at last! See!"

His sharp sword had cut opened Parmenon's toga, and he pointed to the letters L. M., branded on the wretch's shoulder, and which proved that he was the property of Lucius Metellus.

A short and fearful pause ensued, during which the by-standers contemplated this strange scene with silent stupor. Then Metellus raised the short, sharp blade, and plunged it into the breast of Phædria:

"Murderer of my father," he cried, in a voice of thunder, "let Tartarus receive you!"

Phædria fell like a heavy mass; one convulsive shudder shook his powerful frame, and he was dead.

The awe-stricken multitude recoiled with a cry of horror; and the Pretor, who did not know Metellus Celer, ordered his lictors to seize the man who had desecrated his tribunal by the murder of a citizen.

The young man smiled disdainfully.

"Aufidius Namusa," said he, turning to the magistrate, "when has a master, in Rome, lost the right of putting his slave to death? I am Metellus Celer, and this man, who murdered my father, was my slave! Do you understand now what I have done?"

The Pretor declared that Metellus Celer had acted rightfully; and there being no other case for trial, he left the Forum.

"This is the day of justice!" said Metellus. "Young girl," he added, addressing Cecilia, "you have never been a slave, for this Parmenon had no right to buy you! But yet, he remarked, pointing to Aurelia, "remember always with what generous kindness that noble hand rested on your head!"

Cecilia, prostrate at Aurelia's feet, kissed her hands and bathed them with grateful tears, more eloquent than words.

Petronilla, the sublime virgin, had fallen on her knees, and with eyes raised to heaven, gave utterance to her joy in the sacred language of the canticles:

"Lord, the glory of Thy name hath manifested itself! . . . O terrible and good God, Thy right hand hath crushed the strong and raised the child! . . . "

Cecilia ran to her, and they held each other in a long and tender embrace.

She then went to her father who clasped her in his arms and wept; and she held out her hands to Olinthus and Gurges. But the joyful emotion of being surrounded by all she loved was too much for the poor child who had suffered with so much fortitude, and she fainted.

"Glory to God! Praised be the Lord's holy name!" repeated the pious Christian women, as they surrounded Cecilia and tried to revive her.

"Dear Aurelia!" said Flavius Clemens and Vespasian, to their young relation, "you have been the chosen instrument of Providence!"

The young girl gave them a long, sad look, but made no reply. She did not even smile! and when she stepped into her litter, her pale face was bathed in tears. Cries of wild enthusiasm greeted her, a thousand voices united to thank and bless her, but she remained pensive and indifferent, absorbed in the secret thought which was gnawing at her young heart.

As Metellus followed the crowd which was slowly wending its way out of the Forum, a man approached him and whispered in his ear:

"Metellus, this is the second time I have found you in my way . . . Take care that we do not meet a third time!"

The young man turned round to see who had spoken, and recognized Regulus flying by the sacred way!

A few minutes later, silence reigned in the deserted Forum.

Part Third—The Vestal.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE STORM.

A FEW months have elapsed since the events that filled the first parts of our narrative. The physiognomy of Rome has changed, because there is one man more in the great city, and that man is the Emperor Domitian! His presence is a perpetual threat, and who knows but it announces the realization of the fearful schemes conceived before his departure and matured during his absence?

And yet, we shall find the various characters of our story in comparative quiet. Persecutors and victims are equally at peace, and nothing shows that a storm is brewing overhead.

The poor Jews of the Capena-Gate have celebrated with touching rejoicings the wedding of Cecilia and Olinthus. Flavia Domitilla and Aurelia have secured by their generosity, joy and abundance under the roof of the young pair. We therefore now find Cecilia a matron, and she carries this new title becomingly. Her graceful face has recovered the bloom of health and youth; and no trace remains of her past sufferings, save a tinge of melancholy which adds a new attraction to her classic style of beauty.

Olinthus has rented a comfortable house in the Palatine, so that Cecilia should not be far from Flavia Domitilla, whose mission of mercy she still shares; from Aurelia, who is never happier than when the young matron visits her, and from Cornelia who would like to keep her forever in the *Atrium Regium*.

But Cecilia cannot forget the poor exiles of the Capena-Gate—Petronilla, Eutychia, and all those who love her so well—her longest and most frequent visits are for the little colony of Christians. There is so much misfortune to relieve, so many tears to dry, in that unwholesome and neglected section of Rome! If Cecilia was moved with compassion when she was a stranger for those unfortunates, how much more she must feel for them now that she has become their sister by the double ties of faith and gratitude!

She would not be rich. She asked those generous friends who wished to share their wealth with her, to leave her at least some of the poverty of Christ. But when some great want is felt among her poor brethren, she runs to Flavia Domitilla, or, better still, to Aurelia, or to the Grand-Vestal, to teach them how to open their heart to the sweetest enjoyments of the greatest of Christian virtues.

Cecilia has evidently an object in doing this; but she does not speak of it, and she selects indirect means to accomplish it; this is often the surest and quickest way to arrive at one's ends. Cecilia is happy now; happy in her faith and in the love of Olinthus; happy in the affection she has inspired others, for the feelings which our acts awaken resemble the perfumes which act on the senses: they penetrate the most modest souls.

The young matron, notwithstanding her youth and humble condition, shed, without knowing it, a sort of halo around her. The Christians of Capena-Gate venerated her almost as much as Petronilla, and this was natural; she was the only one among these men and women who had had the glory to suffer for Christ's sake and to confess his name. In the household of the consul, Flavius, the like pious homage was rendered the courageous girl, mingled with a lively gratitude for her devotion to the security of this noble family.

From Aurelia and the Grand-Vestal, Cecilia received equal marks of affection; but Aurelia's friendship was free from the calculations of self-interest which influenced, perhaps too much, Cornelia's feelings.

The Grand-Vestal had resumed her ministry in the *Atrium Regium*, and Metellus Celer, following the prudent advice of Vibius Crispus, had left Rome, to seek an inaccessible retreat. But he wrote, from time to time, to Cornelia, and his letters

were handed her by Cecilia who received them from an unknown messenger.

Between the Grand-Vestal and the young man, there was more than the austere sentiment resulting from gratitude; a more tender feeling had crept, unwittingly in their hearts. Cornelia's love was the more vehement, for being the first bright dawn of happiness, lighting up the darkness of a life consumed by despair. She had only one year to wait to recover her freedom, and then! . . .

But will Metellus Celer, the young knight of twenty-eight wed the virgin whose beauty has faded amidst the bitter regrets of long years of solitude? Will he not hesitate before the fatal omens attached to the marriage of vestals relieved of their vows at the age of thirty-six years? Will his love be stronger than these obstacles? Cornelia suffered in secret, all the tortures of doubt, for she dared not confide to any one, the fears and hopes which alternately filled her heart.

Cecilius enjoyed perfect happiness near his daughter and the young centurion whom he proudly called his son-in-law. The ex-tax-gatherer's opinion concerning those accursed Jews he formerly persecuted with so much rigor, had undergone a great change. He was seen frequently in the neighborhood of the Capena-Gate, but it was not, as of old, to carry desolation among the poor exiles; Cecilius, it was said, had become a Christian, saw none but Christians, and faithfully attended all their assemblies.

Caius-Tongilianus-Vespertinus-Gurges, was no longer a simple vespillo. His father had handed him the sceptre of Libitina, and he was now one of the most respected citizens of the neighborhood of the Maximus Circus. Nevertheless, Gurges asked no woman to come and share the honors of his new dignity; and he replied to those who advised him to marry, that it would be time enough to think of it, when the gods would show him another Cecilia.

It will be seen that Gurges had remained a worshipper of Venus-Libitina, his favorite divinity, but this did not keep him from calling as frequently as possible, at the house of Cecilia and Olinthus, those two Christians who, from time to time, made some friendly attacks on his religious ideas.

But Gurges held that all religions are good, provided one is an honest man. Evidently, Gurges was a great philosopher.

The new undertaker of funerals had finally ceased all commercial transactions with Eutrapeles; so completely, indeed, that the funeral agent who would have dared to rob the grave of a handful of hair or a single tooth, for the benefit of the barber, would have been immediately expelled from the honorable corporation of Libitina.

Gurges had a deep grudge against Eutrapeles about the matter of Parmenon's register. He contended that the tonsor should have been more far-sighted, and not get a friend involved in such trouble.

Eutrapeles never spoke of this adventure in which he had been indirectly mingled. It caused him some anxiety for the high dignity with which he hoped to see his zeal rewarded. He endeavored to conjure the disastrous effects of this unlucky affair, by devoting himself still more to the political education of his magpie, and by praising loudly a treatise on the *art of preserving the hair*, recently written by Domitian.*

As for Marcus Regulus he led the most retired life in his magnificent mansion beyond the Tiber. One would have thought that he was trying to be forgotten, and that he thought no longer of the Vestal Cornelia or of the Christians —those two objects of his hatred, for whose ruin he had labored so zealously.

There were several reasons for this seeming indifference, which will appear as we proceed with our narrative; but we must mention one of these causes, as being directly connected with the events already known to the reader.

Cecilia's liberation, and the death of Parmenon, recognized as Phædria, the murderer of Lucius Metellus, interfered with his plans, since he must renounce the hope of discovering the secrets of the Christians, and he lost a valuable accomplice upon whom he relied for the accomplishment of his wicked designs. But there was a danger arising from this last event. Metellus Celer's suspicions were correct, when he surmised that his father's death and the destruction of Vespasian's villa had been ordered by Domitian, carefully planned by Marcus Regulus, and consummated by Phædria, the ignoble instrument chosen for this hideous deed.

*Suet. in Domit. Cap. 18. This author quotes a few lines from this treatise.

Domitian, dreaming of placing himself higher than humanity; proclaiming himself a god, and erecting a temple in Rome, on the very spot where had stood his humble, native roof, could not wish to see preserved the proofs of his low origin and the place where Vespasian and Titus delighted in finding the traces of the mediocrity and plebeian fortune of the Fabius family. Moreover, Reata and Phalacrina had been filled with rumors of foul play at the death of Titus, and, possibly, Lucius Metellus, the friend of Vespasian, and living in his villa, did not take pains to contradict these reports which reached Domitian's ears.

This cruel tyrant had therefore resolved that Lucius Metellus should die, and that the house which had been the cradle of his own family, should be destroyed. But a certain prudence in the execution of this plan was necessary, and the Emperor was somewhat embarrassed how to proceed, when Regulus offered him his services. The vile informer had read Domitian's thoughts, and hoped to gain his entire confidence and favor by assuming the responsibility of this heinous crime.

He got a slave-dealer to offer Lucius Metellus the slave Phædria, whom he had more than once used in his criminal schemes. Phædria's instructions were to ingratiate himself in his new master's favor, whilst secretly inciting the other slaves to revolt; and when the time would come, to lead them to the attack, murder the old man and his son and bury them in the ruins of their home. By this means, the double crime could never be charged to the Emperor, but would be looked upon as the result of one of those servile insurrections so frequent in isolated districts.

Freedom and a sum of money sufficient to start him in life, were to be Phædria's reward. We have seen how faithfully he accomplished his task. Only one of the designated victims escaped: Metellus Celer, who did not return home in time to share his father's fate.

Phædria summoned Regulus to fulfil his promise. The informer was willing, for he now held the slave in his power by this bond of crime, and he would make further use of him; but how should he conceal him from the son, from Metellus Celer, who was searching Rome and even Italy for his father's murderer? Until the young man could be got

rid of, Phædria was sent to Asia Minor. He was provided with false papers and was to change his name, and to disfigure his features so as to be unrecognizable. Regulus would call him back when it would be safe.

It was then that Metellus Celer found himself surrounded by snares, and came nigh perishing, being saved only by the timely interference of the Grand-Vestal. Implicated a second time, he had been compelled to leave Rome for safety. Phædria could now return; which he did, under the name of Parmenon, and with his face so horribly disfigured that we have seen the faithful Sositheus hesitate to recognize him. Regulus set him up as a slave-dealer in a tavern which belonged to him, and allowed him one-third of the profits.

These two wicked men feared and hated each other. Regulus held his accomplice in his power as a fugitive slave, a murderer and incendiary; but Parmenon could divulge that the informer had been the instigator of these crimes. He had, besides, his suspicions as to Domitian's connection with the schemes of which he had been the instrument. Domitian could not forgive Regulus for allowing him to be suspected.

When Parmenon fell under the avenging sword of Metellus Celer, two contradictory feelings filled the informer's breast: hateful rage against the man who defeated his ambitious hopes; and a sense of relief, a grateful joy at being rid of a wretch who often made him tremble.

However, this event had caused a good deal of excitement; people in their surmises came very near the truth, and certain reports were circulated which gave Regulus much uneasiness.

Such was the state of things when the Emperor, having successfully terminated the war against the Dacians, returned triumphant, to the capital of the world.

Since his return, the Emperor had not terrified Rome with any of the cruelties which generally marked his presence. This was an unheard of circumstance! Had his fury been satiated by his former crimes, and had reason at last cured him of his unfounded suspicions? Were the Christians happy enough to be, if not loved, at least forgotten by the Emperor?

No. Domitian hated and feared more than ever; but he waited. Regulus had had a long interview with the tyrant.

They had parted with smiles on their lips, a sure sign of some sinister project.

Yet, not a drop of blood had been shed.

But, before we proceed with our narrative, let us devote a short chapter to this son of Vespasian and brother of Titus, and give the reader an insight of his character.

CHAPTER II.

DOMITIAN.

FLAVIUS DOMITIANUS, the twelfth Cæsar, was born in the year 802 (A. D. 51,) on the ninth of the calends of November (24th of October,) in a house of modest appearance, in the sixth Region of Rome, styled *Alta-Semita*, and which was situate in the *Vicus* known under the name of *Ad Malum-Punicum*. This was the house which he subsequently converted into a sumptuous temple, erected in honor of the Flavia race.

He was the third child of Vespasian, whose first-born, a girl, died in her youth; the second was Titus, of glorious memory. Domitian little resembled his father, and much less his brother.

Vespasian's children were born before he had accumulated wealth; his wife's father, Flavius Liberalis, was a simple clerk in the Treasury. Domitian, during his youth, suffered therefore all the privations of poverty; which did not prevent him, however, from disgracing himself by leading a life of disorder and debauchery.

Vespasian's fortune having grown, Domitian and his brother Titus were brought up in Nero's court. Domitian, like his brother, was probably sitting near Britannicus, when this young prince fell lifeless after drinking the poison poured into his cup by order of the fratricide Nero. Titus, who had tasted the murderous drink, came very near losing his life.

Domitian could then learn from Nero how to get rid of a brother; and from the courtiers how cowardice disguised even the involuntary paleness of their cheeks, which the Emperor might have construed as a vague reproach for his crime.

Did Domitian, at a later day, remember this fearful lesson and wish to imitate it? The contemporary historians hesitate to charge him with this murder; but it is said that he had hastened the death of Titus by having him plunged into a tub full of snow, under the pretext of cooling the internal heat of which the moribund prince complained.

What is certain is that Titus had scarcely drawn his last breath, when Domitian hastened to Rome and had himself proclaimed Emperor by the Pretorians.

Like Nero, he showed, at first, an hypocritical moderation, and his reign had a happy beginning; but already there could be discovered the ridiculous and insatiate vanity, the mixture of vices and virtues which constituted his character. He was not long showing himself in his true light, and revealing his tyrannical duplicity, his avaricious greed, his studied cruelty, inspired by the strange, suspicious fears which ever haunted him.

From this time his series of crimes commenced and continued without interruption: sometimes slowly combined and deeply meditated; at others, perpetrated with the suddenness of madness.

He seldom accomplished these murders, however, without preceding them with a sort of trial. One of his dearest ambitions was even that he should be looked upon as a great and wise judge, and Suetonius relates of him several instances of remarkable integrity. He often presided over the Senate and the courts, and his voice was never more choked by emotion, and his hypocritical protestations of indulgence more profuse, than when he attached importance to a condemnation.

The Senate, invested by the armed cohorts, scrutinized by the Emperor, who counted the sighs and noted even the pallor of the features, had not the courage to refuse. "Nobody," says Pliny-the-Younger, "dared to speak, except the first called upon to give his opinion; the others, mute and passive, made a simple gesture of acquiescence, and thus it was that one alone proposed what all accepted with great sorrow and involuntary fear, but succumbing to the shameful intimidations of tyranny."

The facts presented were often vague and insignificant, but he knew how to give them weight by speaking of threatening conspiracies, of attempts against his person or his power, and

of rebellions against the laws and institutions of the empire. When the charges were so trifling that they could not be brought before the Senate, he employed secret or indirect means, such as poison, exile to distant lands where death awaited the victim, or moral tortures which drove the persecuted wretch to seek relief in voluntary death.

When he had obtained from the Senate a sentence conformable to his wishes, he gloated upon the execution of the victim and the sight of blood. He was, therefore, even more cruel than Nero who, according to Tacitus, ordered the murder, but averted his eyes. Under a tyrant so craftily sanguinary, and so anxious to diminish the horror of his crimes by some semblance of justice and mercy, the informers who had been discouraged by the severity with which Vespasian and Titus pursued them, could not fail to reappear in great number and to act their infamous part in freedom and security.

These men became the instruments of Domitian's power and the means of keeping Rome in a condition of incessant terror. The Senate, the army, the priesthood and the magistracy, all classes of society were infested with these wretches. Regulus, whom we have seen at work, was the most dangerous and the most celebrated among them.

Domitian's insatiable thirst for gold does not seem to have been a natural inclination, but to have grown gradually from the necessity of meeting the extraordinary expenses occasioned by his taste for ruinous exhibitions, his mania for building and the prodigious festivals with which he frequently entertained his people. Some conception may be formed of the treasures wasted for the gratification of his capricious fancies, from the fact that the gilt work alone which entered in the reconstruction of the capitol cost over twelve thousand talents or more than seven millions dollars. His palace was of such vast dimensions that he received there an incredible multitude of citizens, to whom he gave the most magnificent entertainment. In the games of the circus he had the amphitheatre turned into a veritable lake on which appeared such a large number of vessels, that a mock naval-fight was given by two complete fleets. Another time, he employed several legions in planting into the arena full grown trees procured from the neighboring forests, in order to give the people the pleasure

of hunting an immense number of wild beasts collected at great expense from different countries, and let loose in the Maximus Circus.

To pay for these expensive follies, he resorted to the most tyrannical exactions and the most violent measures. But he was as prudent in his spoliations as in his other crimes.

The informers besieged the death-bed of wealthy citizens to win their liberality in favor of the Emperor, and if they failed in this task, the vague allegation of some deed or word construed as offensive to the majesty of the prince, was sufficient ground for the fiscal to confiscate the most considerable estates.

Agricola, the father-in-law of Tacitus, was obliged, like many others, to gratify Domitian's cupidity; in order to protect the interests of his family, he made the Emperor the co-heir of his wife and daughter. During the last hours of this great man, messengers passing from his house to the palace of the Emperor, kept the latter advised of the most minute circumstance that transpired, so great was Domitian's fear that this important legacy would escape him! It is even suspected that he hastened the consummation of his wishes by giving poison to this virtuous citizen.

We have said nothing of Domitian's infamous debauchery which equalled the most monstrous inventions of his predecessors, nor of his religious follies which excelled their greatest acts of madness; neither have we described his incredible acts of vanity, nor related how he made himself the object of universal hatred.

He lived by himself, in his house, as in a fortress, holding no communication with his family—whom he hated and always held in great dread. When he raised the sons of Flavius Clemens to the dignity of Cæsars, it was more with a view to self-protection than to favor their elevation. Continually exposed to conspiracies, he wished by this means to discourage revolutionary attempts and show their uselessness, in presence of successors appointed before-hand, and who, he thought, would prove an invincible obstacle to the ambitious schemes of other pretenders. But the facility with which he afterwards sacrificed all his relations, and the remorseless fury by which he won the surname of "Butcher of his kindred," prove that the ties of blood had no power over his soul—it was inaccessible to the most natural sentiments.

He had some traits of resemblance with the most odious of the princes who preceded him. Like Tiberius, he was wicked and sullen; like the imbecile Claudius, he was weak and irresolute, although superior to him in intellect; and he was as cruel, and more vain, perhaps, than Nero, of hateful memory. Although Juvenal has styled him "*Nero-the-Bald*," many of the old writers were struck by the analogy existing between his characteristic vices and habits, and those of Tiberius. He, himself seems to have understood that in the close study of that emperor's acts, he would find the teachings best adapted to his own nature; and, although he had a taste for books and literature, as proved by his efforts to endow Rome with fine libraries and with copies of the best works from Alexandria and elsewhere, he seldom read anything but the "Memoirs of Tiberius," endeavoring always to shape his conduct and his style according to those detestable traditions.

Physically, Domitian was tall, and his demeanor affectedly modest. His features had something idiotic, although his eyes were remarkably large. His form had been graceful, and his appearance comely, in his youth, but his premature baldness and obesity had left little of this comeliness of face or gracefulness of outline.

His skill with the bow was extraordinary. The Parthians and Scythians, so vaunted by ancient writers; the famous Aster, whose arrow pierced Phillip of Macedon's right eye; William Tell, who acquired so much renown in modern times for having shot an apple off his little son's head, would have been deemed but inferior archers along side of Domitian. When shooting wild beasts in his retreat at Mount Albinus, he would sometimes say to his companions: "See, I shall stick two arrows in that animal's head, in guise of horns." And he never failed to do it. At other times a young lad would stand off at a considerable distance and hold up his hand with the fingers spread open, and Domitian would speed arrow after arrow through the narrow space without as much as grazing the skin of the fingers.

But he soon tired of innocent diversion; his cruelty might sleep but it never died. Since his return to Rome, Domitian had amused himself in perpetrating certain jokes, which were not without significance, as indicating his gloomy train of thoughts. We shall cite an instance.

He sent invitations to the principal senators and knights to dine with him on a certain day. As a matter of course, all came, but the smile vanished from their lips when they entered the banquet hall: the floor, the ceiling, the walls, everything about the room was draped in black. For each guest there was a small sepulchral column bearing his name, and supporting a funeral lamp, whose feeble rays dimly lighted this gloomy scene. A number of young slaves, completely nude but blackened from head to foot, personated the infernal shades. After performing lugubrious and frightful dances, they placed dishes before the guests. These dishes were such as it was customary to offer the dead in the funeral ceremonies.

The company, overwhelmed by terror, remained speechless. Domitian alone spoke, but it was to entertain his guests with tragical narratives and ghost stories. Every one thought their last hour had come, and the dishes remained untouched. Having well enjoyed their terror, Domitian committed his guests to the care of strange slaves who carried them home in mourning litters.

Those poor people had hardly recovered from their stupor when Domitian's messengers were announced. Was it the death-warrant? No; Domitian sent to each guest the dishes which had been placed before him, the sepulchral column bearing his name, and the slave who had waited on him. But dishes and columns had been scrubbed, and were found to be silver plate of admirable workmanship; the slaves had taken a bath, and were now handsome boys clad in rich garments.

Notwithstanding this happy termination, the joke was little relished, and was long remembered by the victims.

Two persons only were satisfied. These were Domitian and Regulus.

Domitian was delighted, because he had terribly frightened his courtiers; Regulus, because he thought the Emperor was getting roused from his lethargy and would soon require his services.

He thought right. A few days after this, he received a message from the Emperor, commanding his presence at the Palatine.

Domitian awaited his coming in one of the galleries of this extensive mansion; but, becoming impatient, at the informer's

delay, he called for his bow and arrows, and stepped into the garden. Soon after, an attendant announced that Marcus Regulus had arrived:

"Let him come here," replied Domitian.

CHAPTER III.

THE LUMINOUS GALLERY.

WHEN Domitian stepped into the garden with his bow and arrows, he had also called in a loud voice:

"Hirsutus! Hirsutus!"

At this name, a boy, or rather a young man, for he was eighteen years old, came out suddenly from behind a tree, and approached the Emperor.

"Hirsutus," said Domitian, "go and stand yonder, I need a little recreation."

"Are you going to hurt me again?" replied Hirsutus, without attempting to disguise his unwillingness, and speaking in a familiar tone which few dared use with Domitian.

"Oh!" remarked the Emperor; "do you still think of the little scratch you got the other day? It is the first time that such a thing happens to me!"

"You call this a scratch?" replied Hirsutus, with a bitter smile.

And he held up his hand, the middle finger of which was fearfully torn, the flesh having been cut to the bone.

"What my son," remarked Domitian, with something like compassion in his voice; "are you not yet cured? Heliodorus, my physician, said it would be nothing. Why did you not use the salve sent by Eutrapeles? . . . Go," continued Domitian, resuming his walk, "go, you will hold up the other hand."

Hirsutus made no reply. He preceded the Emperor towards the hippodrome But who could have studied the poor lad's face, would have read there a strange desire to revenge himself on the man who daily placed his life in danger for mere amusement.

Domitian, busy with selecting his arrows and examining his bow, had not remarked this.

Hirsutus was a poor, misshapen creature. His pear-shaped head was covered with thin, wiry hair, short and hard like the hair of a modern clothes-brush. He owed his name to this peculiarity. This pointed head was connected by a very short neck to an extraordinarily large body; his arms were long and thin, and his legs crooked and dragging, making him altogether one of the most hideous freaks of nature. But a strange light flashed from his eyes, and a lively intelligence animated this uncouth mass which was not unlike the bust of some divinity of the ancient Latium.

Whence came this singular being? Where was he born? Nobody about the imperial court, and not even Domitian himself, could have answered these questions. The boy had been brought by a necromancer named Ascletarion, who came to Rome occasionally, and in whom Domitian had the most superstitious confidence, although he subsequently had him put to death, for saying that he knew when the Emperor would die.

Hirsutus hardly ever left his master. Domitian consulted him on the most important occasions, and more than once the appointments to the first offices of the empire depended upon the capricious whim of this hideous creature. But all this, as we have seen, did not prevent the Emperor from making him his plaything and exposing his life daily. Hirsutus hated Domitian mortally, but he concealed this feeling carefully in the hope that an occasion would present itself to satisfy it.

When Marcus Regulus arrived near the emperor, he found him engaged in shooting his arrows between the poor lad's fingers. Domitian, at first, paid little attention to the informer who waited respectfully until he should be spoken to; and when he addressed him, at last, it was merely to call his attention to some skilful shot, and the looks he threw him were anything but satisfied. Yet, Regulus felt no uneasiness at the coldness of this reception. He was calm, and the vague smile which played on his lips expressed great confidence.

Suddenly, Hirsutus uttered a cry of pain; an arrow had pierced his hand. The poor fellow ran about, howling with mingled pain and rage, and trying vainly to pull the shaft from his wound.

"By Minerva!" exclaimed Domitian, without the least show of compassion for his favorite's sufferings, "Regulus, you are the cause of this awkwardness! You distracted my attention! . . . But let us drop this," he continued, throwing aside his bow and arrows. "Come in my gallery, I wish to speak to you about some serious matters."

But we must describe the curious gallery into which Regulus followed Domitian, ere we proceed to relate their conversation.

During the reign of Nero, a singular stone was discovered in the quarries of Cappadocia which has been carefully described by Pliny-the-Elder in his Natural History. This stone, as hard as marble, was at the same time transparent, or rather luminous. It was, for this reason, called *phengyte*, from the Greek name for light. Pliny also relates that Nero had a temple built with these stones, and the light penetrated into the interior, as though there had been no walls.

Notwithstanding its hardness, this stone could be split in thin layers, like slate; and the wealthy citizens subsequently used these transparent panes in their windows. For glass, although known to the Romans and used to manufacture vessels of various shapes, had not yet been made into panes.

Domitian wished, like Nero, to turn to account this precious discovery, but for his own benefit—not in honor of the gods. In order that no one should approach him unseen when he was alone, he had caused a wide gallery to be constructed with these luminous stones, in the interior of his immense palace, and it was his favorite resort when he did not walk in the gardens. It was in this gallery he amused himself with killing flies, when tired of shooting arrows between the fingers of the unfortunate Hirsutus.

Vibius Crispus never approached this part of the palace. He feared that Domitian might remember his joke about the flies.

Domitian, having reached the centre of the gallery, looked around to see that nobody was near and casting an angry look on the informer, said:

"You are very awkward! Regulus."

"How is that? my lord," asked the informer respectfully, but with singular assurance.

"Read," simply remarked Domitian, handing him a sheet of papyrus, which he drew from under his purple robe.

The informer looked triumphant.

"It is a proclamation, my lord," he replied, without taking the document. "I need not read it. . . . I am already acquainted with its contents. . . . Here is a similar copy!"

And the informer handed Domitian another sheet of papyrus.

"A proclamation! . . You said a proclamation? . . . " repeated Domitian with unfeigned surprise. "But this does not have the appearance of one!"

"My lord, the word may not be very exact. But when one knows the object of this writing, one may, I should think, style it a proclamation, for it aims at preparing the mind of the people."

"Prepare it to what?" asked Domitian, with visible anxiety.

"To rebellion and a change of reign," replied Regulus, bluntly.

Domitian bounded like a wild beast wounded by the hunter's shaft.

"By Minerva!" he cried, with concentrated rage; "can it be true! Is such the aim of all those covert allusions? Oh! they shall not succeed! and I will make them repent of their audacity! . . . But who is the author?" he asked, fixing his blood-shot eyes on Regulus.

"The author of this impious project and of these libels," replied the informer, is Lucius Antonius, the general commanding the army of Germania, who wants to have himself proclaimed emperor—he, or another, it matters little. Here is, at all events, another document of far greater significance, which does not leave the least doubt as to his projects."

Domitian jerked the manuscript from the hands of Regulus, and proceeded to read it with eager curiosity. In this document, as in the other one, the writer reminded the people of Domitian's many crimes; he revealed the true motive of Lucius Metellus' murder, and alluded sneeringly to the low birth of the man who had had the boldness to style himself a god and to have his statue worshipped in the capitol; he insulted Domitian's recently acquired glory, by stating that he had been shamefully beaten by the Dacians and Marcomans, and, following the precedent established by himself in a previous expedition, had gotten up the evidences of an

imaginary victory by purchasing a large number of slaves and parading them as prisoners of war, after having their hair and their garments arranged according to the fashion of the people he claimed to have conquered. Finally, the writer ended with an energetic appeal to the Roman people, whom he called upon to aid and sustain the effort soon to be made for the tyrant's overthrow by a numerous army, which he announced as ready to march on Rome to deliver her from the yoke of the odious Domitian.

In order to understand the full import of this proclamation and the rage it must have excited in Domitian, it must be known that the peace which ended the war against Decebalus had been purchased at the cost of Roman honor. Owing to Domitian's mismanagement, his expedition undertaken to avenge Oppius Sabinus and Cornelius Fuscus, whose legions had been cut to pieces by Decebalus and Duras, the two Dacian kings, aided by the brave Degys, brother of Decebalus, would have ended in a fearful disaster, had he not averted it by signing an ignominious treaty. The Emperor, nevertheless, had the impudence of soliciting the glory of a triumphal reception, and the Senate gave its cowardly assent.

The first proclamation contained only injurious revelations, the true import of which was more fully developed in the second. And yet, what had most deeply wounded Domitian's vanity were the particulars concerning his humble origin and of the murder and incendiarism committed in order to conceal or rather wipe out the proofs of this origin. Hence his anger against Marcus Regulus whom he had intrusted with the management of this already old affair—either the secrecy or the ability of the accomplices must have been at fault, since the accusation was now trumped up so boldly.

But the Emperor foresaw the coming of grave events; and his resentment against the informer melted before the greater anger which darkened his brow as he read the proofs of his enemies' audacity.

"How is it," he asked, after a little reflection, and showing the first proclamation of which he had a copy; "that you have this libel in your possession? Palfurius, who handed it to me this morning, assured me that no other copy existed?"

"Palfurius must be very skilful!" said Regulus with a

smile of contempt. "For the last two days this proclamation has been posted on all the walls in Rome!"

"Indeed!" cried Domitian, with mingled rage and terror. "And is this other one also publicly posted?" he asked, showing the second document brought by Regulus.

"No, my lord, it has not yet been posted, but it will be by to-morrow," replied Regulus.

"To-morrow!" repeated Domitian with the same terror.

"Yes, to-morrow, my lord, unless the package of copies just introduced into Rome, is immediately seized!"

"Immediately! Immediately!" cried Domitian, with a madman's fury. "And let the man who received it be put to death! . . . Hallo, guards! . . . "

But he stopped, seeing Regulus bare his bosom and kneel before him.

"What are you doing?" the Emperor asked with surprise.

"I bare my throat to my master's sword," replied the hypocrite humbly. "For the package of proclamations is at my house!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Domitian.

"Unless," continued Regulus, "the Emperor should think that his miserable slave has done right in preventing them from falling into other hands."

"By Minerva! Regulus, you are a cunning fellow!" exclaimed Domitian. "This is the way to serve one's master! But may the Fates cut my thread of life, if I can guess how you managed to obtain possession of these documents."

"In a very simple way, my lord, . . . I have bought the man to whom they were sent. Unfortunately I only found him out after the first proclamation had been posted, for it was only then I suspected that there existed a depositary."

"Who is this man?" asked Domitian.

"One Misitius, an obscure creature. He lives not far from the two temples of Isis and Serapis. I learned what was going on from the Archigallus, who gets his hair dressed at Eutrapeles'. This Misitius is certainly in communication with Lucius Antonius, for he goes for the packages to an appointed place, on the Flaminia way. These packages, well wrapped in heavy papyrus, are brought from Germany by a courier. They are delivered to Misitius at midnight, near the Garden hill."

"But this man will surely reveal the names of Antonius' accomplices," remarked Domitian, interrupting Regulus.

"I intend that he shall, my lord," replied the informer, "although I do not necessarily need his assistance to procure a list of the names of the conspirators, for I have other means. . . . But, at all events, I shall make some use of him."

"What do you mean?" asked the Emperor, with lively curiosity.

"Read this, my lord," replied Regulus, solemnly. "This letter was found among the libels."

Domitian had no sooner cast his eyes on the document than he gave a start of surprise. After reading it, he remained plunged in astonishment, making no effort to conceal his impressions.

The letter was addressed by Metellus Celer to the Grand-Vestal Cornelia, and read as follows:

"DEAR CORNELIA,—In a few days you will hear a good deal about Lucius Antonius, and it will probably be stated that he intends to have himself proclaimed emperor. Do not believe this, but assure our friends of his real designs, with which I am perfectly acquainted. Lucius is assembling sufficient forces to overthrow the odious tyrant, Domitian; but he is too devoted to Flavius Clemens to think of wearing the crown which properly belongs to the two young Cæsars whose names are popular in Rome. His intention is, therefore, to proclaim them as soon as his legions will be ready to march.

"Dear soul of my life, I am still buried in my retreat where, without taking any part in this enterprise, I make vows for its success.

"What consequences must result for us from this great event! First the happiness of seeing each other freely! And soon, doubtless, the greater bliss of being united for ever! . . . For under two Christian emperors, what prejudices, what vain omens could prevent us from being united.'"

"What does this mean? *Two Christian Emperors.* . . ." asked Domitian, when he had finished reading this letter, the meaning of which, in great part, he did not understand.

"My lord," said Regulus, purposely selecting an indirect way to answer the question, "have you ever made the 'Venus' throw' when playing the game of tesseræ?"

"No," said Domitian, who could not see the drift of this question, "though I have oftentimes made the 'Dog's throw.'"*

*The game of tesseræ was played with three ivory dice similar to ours. The player who threw the three sixes, made the *Venus' throw* and won the game. The three aces were called the *Dog's throw*.

"Well, my lord, to-day, Fortune has prepared for you the finest Venus' throw that a player has ever made."

"How is that?"

"Did you not charge me, my lord, to surprise the Grand-Vestal and Metellus Celer? . . . "

"I did," said Domitian, "but what of it?"

"Well, my lord, in this letter you have the means to punish them! . . . And did you not commission me, besides," added the informer, "to find out the projects of the Christians? . . . You know them now!"

"What! Vespasian and Domitian, my grand-nephews, could be the two Christian emperors alluded to in Metellus Celer's letter? . . . "

"Yes, my lord, and I will add that Flavius Clemens, the two Flavia Domitillas, all your relations in fact, are Christians and conspire to overthrow you."

"Oh!" cried Domitian, and his accent betrayed his terror, and still more his profound astonishment at this sudden discovery, "they are all Christians! all . . . even to my niece Aurelia? . . . "

"No, my lord, the divine Aurelia has so far resisted all the entreaties of your cousin, Flavia Domitilla, she who has spread the poison of that new doctrine in your family, but unless something is done, the divine Aurelia will succumb also. . . . "

The informer paused, for the Emperor no longer listened to him.

Domitian, in prey to visible excitement, was pacing slowly the marble floor of the gallery. If we have succeeded in describing this tyrant's character as we have found it in history, the reader will easily imagine the strange perplexity in which he was thrown by the startling facts so suddenly revealed by Regulus.

He felt that he was hated, and the revolt of Lucius Antonius might arouse Rome and cause it to rebel against his authority.

On the other hand, how would he deal with the Christians, whose mysterious power frightened him, and who, besides, would count on such formidable adversaries in his own family.

Would he bathe in their blood? Nero had done so, and the Christians had become more numerous, notwithstanding his executions, or perhaps in consequence of them.

Would it not be necessary, however, to strike at this sect, commencing with his own relations? But would he not then inspire such universal horror that his overthrow would become inevitable?

Then, the voices of the future, the predictions already heard, whispered in his ear that the Christians would become the masters of the world, and the race of David would control the empire.

Were the prophecies to be realized, which had so long occupied the public mind?

"Oh!" thought Domitian, in his superstitious terror, "those sons of David's are in my power! It is fifteen days since Fronto brought them to Rome . . . It is time I should interrogate them . . . To-morrow I shall have them brought in the presence of all my court . . . I shall see whether they have accomplices . . . Let the guilty ones tremble, whoever they may be!"

We need not say that Flavius Clemens, the two young Cæsars and all their family had nothing to do with the rebellion planned by Lucius Antonius. But it was true that the latter as Metellus Celer's letter led one to suppose, strengthened himself by the use of their names, which were exceedingly popular, because of their near relationship with Vespasian and Titus. It was also true that the general of the army of Germany had no other intention in marching upon Rome, than to overthrow Domitian and put his nephews in his place, for the people looked with pleasure upon the young Cæsars as the heirs of the empire.

But Regulus, who knew very little concerning the conspiracy of which Antonious was the head, had nevertheless seized with eagerness this opportunity to resume the plotting interrupted by Cecilia's release and Parmenon's death, and, as we have seen, in informing the Emperor that his relations were Christians, he had taken care to represent them as conspirators.

We shall show directly what Domitian meant by those sons of David whom he held in his power, and proposed to interrogate in presence of his court.

"Are you certain," asked the Emperor, stopping abruptly before Regulus, "of all you are telling me? How did you get this information? You will readily understand the grave

character of these revelations, and how necessary it is that I should be informed of the smallest circumstances connected with them."

"My lord," said Regulus, "permit me to relate all that has taken place during your absence, and what I have done to obey the instructions you had left me."

At this juncture a singular and barely perceptible noise reached the ears of the two men, who turned quickly to see if any one was spying their secrets. But the wide gallery was deserted and silent, and the luminous stones reflected no other image than those of the Emperor and Regulus.

"Did you hear, Regulus," said Domitian with uneasiness, and pointing to a colossal statue of Minerva, placed in the centre of the gallery on a bronze pedestal. "It seemed to me the noise came from that direction . . ."

"Let us verify the fact, my lord," said Regulus, "the same noise attracted my attention."

The Emperor and the informer walked around the statue, but saw no one.

"It is nothing, my lord," remarked Regulus, "the great weight of this statue causing its base to settle in the soil, has probably occasioned the slight noise we heard."

"Very likely; well, Regulus, begin your narrative, I am anxious to know all."

The informer's long narrative must have awakened a powerful interest in Domitian, for he listened to it with much attention; but the reader being already acquainted with the events that formed its substance, we deem it unnecessary to repeat it.

"However," said Regulus after relating his disappointments, "I did not lose courage, and the gods have permitted that I should again, and by other means, obtain possession of all those secrets, so important to my master's safety, and the proof of which I have hastened to bring to his knowledge."

The informer, however, was not very explicit in the second part of his narrative; he did not wish to say by what means he had obtained possession of the documents which he had brought to the Emperor. He merely repeated that he had corrupted Misitius, whose acquaintance he had made through the Archigallus. Having finished his story, he asked the Emperor what he thought of all this.

"It requires reflection," replied Domitian. "I shall again have need of your zealous services," he added, putting his hand familiarly on the informer's shoulder. Regulus blushed with pleasure at this caressing gesture accompanied by a glance which promised future favor as the reward of future infamy.

"Do you know," remarked Domitian after a short pause, "that this cousin of mine, Flavia Domitilla, is a veritable bane in the family. She it is who corrupted all my other relations. I see it. . . . I want to begin with her," he added, with a dark smile, "what shall I do with her?"

"Speak, my lord, I shall obey," replied Regulus, bowing low.

"We shall think of it," growled Domitian. "As for that young beau, Metellus Celer and his Vestal . . ."

"Will the Emperor permit me to give my advice?" asked Regulus.

"Speak," said Domitian.

"It would be perhaps better to wait the further development of events," said the informer. "I have placed a man devoted to me near Metellus Celer, and I am sure that we can seize the latter in the retreat which he thinks so secure, whenever circumstances will require it. But if he is, as his letter would lead us to believe, connected with this conspiracy of Antonius, does not the Emperor see what precious information may be obtained from this source?"

"You are right, Regulus, let us wait! . . . And as for the Flavius family . . . let us wait also. When they will have fully betrayed themselves, my severity will seem natural and legitimate. . . Moreover, to-morrow all these questions will have made a great step. Regulus, do not fail to be here to-morrow. . . You will be able to observe some curious and significant things. . . . Go, Regulus, I am satisfied with your zeal. . . Leave all these documents with me."

The informer handed the various packages to the Emperor, who placed them on a tripod near Minerva's statue, and accompanied Regulus to give him further instructions. They walked out of the gallery into another apartment, where they remained in conversation a little longer.

No sooner had Domitian and Regulus left the phengite

gallery than the bronze base of Minerva's statue opened noiselessly; and Hirsutus springing forth, seized the papers and swiftly disappeared with them in his hiding place. The secret panel fell back to its place, and the most expert eye could not have detected its existence.

Silence and solitude reigned in the immense gallery when the Emperor returned.

He could not restrain an exclamation of surprise upon reaching the tripod and missing the papers he had so recently put there. Laying his hand mechanically on the gilded surface, he felt something warm and damp that made him recoil with terror. His fingers were stained with blood!

Domitian cried aloud and the echoes of the luminous gallery repeated the cry. The guards rushed in thinking the Emperor had called for help.

They found him gazing with superstitious terror on Minerva's statue.

"Go away! retire!" cried Domitian angrily, for he did not wish others to witness his anguish

When he was again alone, he examined the statue carefully, feeling the joints of the bronze base with his fingers. But his search was fruitless; he saw nothing but a compact mass of metal.

"This is strange," he muttered, passing his hand on his brow moist with the cold sweat of fear. "To-morrow, this statue shall be pulled down . . ."

In a book store on the Sacred Way, a hundred men were busy copying, by the light of numerous lamps, a document which a stranger had just brought in.

This document was the second proclamation of Antonius, so mysteriously stolen from Domitian by the boy Hirsutus, and which, it will be remembered, contained an energetic appeal to arms.

Next day, the walls of Rome were covered with these copies, and the Pretorians had to use force to disperse the threatening crowds assembled near them, and from which were heard the most outrageous and significant curses against Domitian.

CHAPTER IV.

MINERVA'S STATUE.

DOMITIAN, frightened by the strange adventure of Minerva's statue and the mysterious disappearance of the documents he had intended to turn to such good account, passed a restless night. Suetonius relates that during the few moments of sleep which the Emperor enjoyed, a dream brought him the most frightful omens.

He saw Minerva, the goddess whom he honored specially with a superstitious worship, step slowly from her pedestal, leave the gallery consecrated to her name, and approach, with desolate attitude, the couch where he lay trembling.

But it was no longer the armed goddess which had sprung from the brain of Jupiter, the King of Olympus. She had doffed her warlike vestments and resembled now a young maiden who has been touched by the cold and mortal hand of the Parcæ. Her shining helmet, her shield, her armor and lance, all these symbols of her invincible power had vanished, as if she had succumbed to the superior strength of an adversary, and he had despoiled her and made a trophy of her arms.

During a few minutes, Domitian contemplated her in silence, the cold sweat pearling on his brow. The goddess, erect and her hands joined in supplication, gazed upon him sadly, without moving her lips, and motionless like a brown statue weeping upon a tomb. The inert mass had been animated for a few moments, by a prodigy, and then, had resumed the coldness and rigidity of bronze.

At last, by another prodigy, her arm was raised slowly towards the Emperor; her eyes moved in their orbits; her lips parted, and in a harsh voice that rang like the sound of a trumpet, she cried three times:

"Domitian! Domitian! Domitian!"

Then lowering her voice, she added sadly:

"I can no longer protect thee! . . . A more powerful god has broken my weapons! . . . Jupiter himself could not save his daughter! . . ."

The Emperor bounding on his bed, awoke suddenly, and screamed so loudly, that his guards who watched in the adjoining room, rushed in to protect him.

Domitian was moving his arms wildly, as if to drive away some fearful vision, and repeating in a voice full of anguish:

"Save me! save me! . . . Help Minerva! . . . she is there! . . . there! . . . Do you see her? . . . She abandons me! . . ."

But no other eye could discover that which Domitian's gaze followed with increasing anxiety in this vast room scarcely lighted by a single lamp, nor that which his trembling hand pointed at in the vacant gloom.

At early dawn, when Regulus entered the Emperor's room, he found Domitian kneeling by his bedside, his hands raised to heaven.

Regulus had read the mysterious proclamation posted on the walls of Rome, during the night, and not understanding how these documents, which he held safe at home, could have been made public, he had hastened to the palace to have this strange fact explained, and, at all events, to inform the Emperor of it. But on finding Domitian in this state of complete prostration, caused by the events of that fearful night, he foresaw some circumstance still more fatal than those which already caused his anxiety; and extending his hand to the Emperor, he exclaimed:

"In the name of the gods, my lord, what is the matter with you, and what has happened?"

Domitian raised his vacant and tearful eyes upon the informer, and gathering a little courage from his presence, wiped away the cold sweat from his brow, and murmured hoarsely:

"Fearful omens! Horrible night! . . ."

"My lord," said Regulus, who, seeing his master overwhelmed by a terror which he could not understand, sought to divert his attention by an important disclosure, "the document I gave you yesterday, and of which I alone possess the copy, has been posted in Rome last night. How did this happen?"

"This is as it should be," replied Domitian, showing no astonishment; "Minerva, who abandons me, has taken these documents and has doubtless caused them to be distributed in

Rome. . . I am lost, Regulus," cried the tyrant with sudden fierceness, "the gods have conspired against me! they want my death! . . . Let their bolts strike me if they wish!" he added in a tone of despair, and hiding his face in his hands.

Triumphing at last of his own weakness and returning gradually to the angry mood, Domitian narrated to Regulus, with many interruptions, what had occurred since their last interview.

Those who are familiar with the ancient writers, know how strangely superstitious the Romans were, and the facility with which they accepted the most incredible prodigies. Regulus was particularly addicted to these superstitious fears, and he was often known to shed the blood of victims to conjure the effects of evil omens and propitiate the anger of the gods. We may then imagine the impressions left in his soul by the Emperor's narrative, so eloquently strengthened by the mysterious removal of the papers, the apparition of Minerva, and the unaccountable divulgation of Lucius Antonius' proclamation.

But who was this god, more powerful than Minerva, greater even than Jupiter, since the King of Olympus could not protect his daughter against his power?

Domitian and Regulus, moved by the same presentiment, remembering the rumors so long circulated in Rome, thought of the God of the Christians, and without communicating to each other this thought, betook themselves to reflect that it would not be wise to attack Him at this time. Would He not come to the assistance of his worshippers if they were threatened? And since He had had the power to overthrow Minerva, could it be hoped that He would spare the Emperor?

Domitian expressed this secret resolve of his frightened heart when, after a long pause, he said to Regulus:

"It is to-day I must see those sons of David, announced to Rome by the Fates. . . It will be, if I believe certain secret warnings, the end of these mysterious events . . . the beginning of some hope or the confirmation of all my fears . . . We must beware of this unseen power which nobody knows and which reveals itself by such prodigies!"

Whilst conversing in this manner, the Emperor and Regulus were walking slowly through the vast apartments of the

Palatine-House. They reached the hall where they had parted the day before, and which was contiguous to the luminous gallery in which stood this statue of Minerva, the cause of so many terrors.

Since the apparition that had troubled his sleep, Domitian had not dared to enter the gallery; but he felt a lively curiosity to know what had become of the statue; whether it had left its pedestal forever; or, if it had resumed its place, whether it was still despoiled of its armor, as he had seen her during the night.

Domitian, still under the impression of his terror, would not have thought of going alone into the fatal gallery, but encouraged by the presence of Regulus, he determined to verify the facts immediately. Pale and trembling, they entered together the gallery of phengite stones.

The goddess was standing as usual on her bronze pedestal. The rays of the rising sun playing on her richly gilded helmet, her shield and armor, surrounded her with a flood of light; her lance was still grasped in her motionless hand. In other words, nothing was changed in the statue which Domitian and Regulus examined with anxious care. Not daring to lay their hands on it, lest an avenging flame should burst forth to strike them, yet they looked closely at the faintest lineaments of the elaborate carving of the pedestal, as if they had suspected the truth; but the bronze mass kept its own secrets, and Domitian and Regulus gave up all hopes of discovering what the gods doubtless wished should remain an impenetrable mystery.

"Come, Regulus," said Domitian, still more discouraged after this fruitless search, "we must give up the hope of learning anything from this statue. . . By Jupiter! all this is strange and incredible! . . . If I had not seen the goddess move in the darkness, I might perhaps doubt! . . . But there is a terrible and significant reality in these facts. . . Well, we shall see. . . Regulus, you must be here punctually at the seventh hour. That is the time fixed for the examination of those sons of David."

Regulus bowed profoundly and promised to be at the Emperor's order at the hour appointed. He then hastened to take leave of Domitian, for he was anxious to be relieved of the restraint he had exercised to conceal, whilst in his master's presence, the great trouble that filled his heart.

From the windows of the palace, the Emperor could hear the distant clamor of the excited crowds of citizens who had read the proclamation of Lucius Antonius and now gave utterance to loud curses and threats against the tyrant; but he could see also his Pretorian guard whose devotion he had secured by frequent liberalities, charge the multitude and disperse them after covering the street with dead bodies.

A smile of confidence lighted his face as he withdrew into the interior of the palace, murmuring to himself:

"By my fortune! so long as these brave swords are mine, I may defy even the anger of the gods!"

Whilst Domitian is preparing to interrogate the sons of David in presence of his court, let us explain how Hirsutus could conceal himself in Minerva's statue, for what object he pried into his master's secrets, and why he had so adroitly possessed himself of the pamphlets, letters and proclamations which Regulus had brought to the Emperor.

The execration against Domitian for his numerous crimes was general in Rome, and several conspiracies had been organized for his overthrow, but they had all failed owing either to the weakness of resources, the treachery of some member, or the want of boldness in the leaders. Nevertheless, two new conspiracies, in and out of Rome, had been recently formed, with hopes of better success.

The immediate object of both was the same—the overthrow of the tyrant. The means of action and the ultimate design alone were different. One of these conjurations had at its head Lucius Antonius, General of the army of Germany, who relied on his legions, and intended to march on Rome, and proclaim the fall of Domitian.

Little is known about this revolt, which was promptly suppressed, as we shall see. The Senate, it is believed, favored the plans of Antonius, which were merely to bring about a change of reign, by placing the young Cæsars, Vespasian and Domitianus, his designated successors, on Domitian's throne.

This outbreak was about to take place, and yet Domitian knew nothing of it. The first news were brought to him by Palfurius Sura, whose whole merit was that of having torn a copy of the proclamation from the walls of the city, to bring it to the Emperor.

Regulus had been more fortunate, owing to circumstances which will be explained in another chapter. He had managed to seize the packages of proclamations and to inform Domitian of the name of the General who threatened his power. But Regulus knew nothing beyond this, and consequently, the informations brought by him to the Emperor, were very incomplete. We need not add that the informer was working actively to complete them.

The object of the second conspiracy was to place on the throne Cocceius Nerva, a respected old man who had twice been invested with the Consular dignity, and who was then sixty-five years old. This plot had originated during the war against the Dacians. It was managed with the greatest prudence, and the conjurors watched a favorable opportunity with patience, avoiding any rash and premature action. They intended, as a last resort, if the opportunity to act did not present itself, to get rid of Domitian by assassination.

The Emperor had not the least suspicion of the existence of this conspiracy, and neither Regulus nor any other of the numerous informers who served the master with so much zeal had suspected it.

All that Domitian knew was that Apollonius of Thyana had promised the empire to Nerva, after consulting the entrails of a murdered child. This horrible sacrifice had been consummated in a distant country house, and Domitian had been informed of it by one of the disciples of the philosopher, named Philiscus, whose humane feelings had revolted at the abominable act. But Philiscus did not know that Apollonius belonged to the Nerva party, and that the human sacrifice was intended to inform the conjurors of the issue of their undertaking.

Domitian, however, was much incensed against Apollonius of Thyana for having encouraged such hopes. The philosopher, fearing the vengeance of the Emperor had carefully prepared the means of justifying his course; he wished to obtain an audience from Domitian and to propitiate him with presents of rare things brought back from the distant countries he had visited. This was why we have seen him, at Pompey's portico, soliciting the intervention of Aurelia and offering the young girl the beautiful murrhine vases she had admired.

Hirsutus, the hideous abortion, belonged body and soul to

both of the conspiracies. The lively hatred he bore Domitian had led him to embrace with joy every project that promised his resentment a complete revenge. Both parties had accepted eagerly his co-operation, for his position near the prince and the great favor he enjoyed, together with his bright intellect and the bitter hatred that filled his heart, made him a valuable auxiliary.

He served the two conspiracies with equal zeal and faithfulness, never betraying to one the information which concerned the other; preserving an inviolable secrecy in all his acts, and doing his utmost to preserve the mystery of his double participation. So ably did he manage this, that the leaders in Germany knew nothing of the insurrection that was preparing in Rome, and the Nerva party was taken by surprise by the proclamation of Antonius. Little did Hirsutus care when revenge would come, provided Domitian was overthrown and he helped to do it.

Hirsutus having remarked that the luminous gallery was the spot where Domitian held his secret interviews and decided the most important questions, asked himself whether it would not be possible to become an invisible listener. It was no easy matter, and yet he succeeded in securing a place of concealment in the brazen base of Minerva's statue. It is probable that, assisted by the gold of the conspirators, he had secured the services of some skilful workman during Domitian's absence.

The noise heard by Domitian and Regulus was made by Hirsutus entering his post of observation by a subterranean passage. The young man had heard the most important part of the conversation between the Emperor and the informer. We have seen how adroitly he had taken possession of the papers. The bloody mark on the tripod was from his wounded hand.

That evening three important things were done by Hirsutus:

He sent the proclamations to the tavern we have mentioned, with orders that they should be copied and posted that same night.

At the same time a courier was dispatched from Rome to Germany, bearing the following despatch, written in a secret cipher:

"Misitius has been bought over. The proclamations were placed in the hands of the Emperor by Regulus, but a copy has been redeemed.

Your faithful Galbula is having it copied, at this moment, in his tavern, and the copies will be posted this very night, despite your agent's treachery. The die is cast. Unfurl your banner and march upon Rome. You are expected here.—VALE."

Finally, Tongilianus Gurges was disturbed in his sleep by some one knocking loudly at his door. The sub-vespillo who went to open, found an unknown man who wished to see the master immediately, on important business. Gurges consented to leave his bed, but his ill-humor was visible; the stranger paid no attention to this, however, but asked him abruptly when they were alone:

"You are the Grand-Vestal's friend?"

"Somewhat, citizen," replied Gurges with impertinent fatuity, "we believe we have that honor."

"Well," said the stranger, "here is a letter which must be handed to her."

And he placed into the Vespillo's hands the letter of Metellus Celer to Cornelia, which we have seen Regulus bring to Domitian.

"You will inform the Grand-Vestal," added the unknown, "that the Emperor has had this writing in his possession long enough to read it. The Grand-Vestal and her friends must act in consequence. Good night."

And the stranger made his exit.

"Here is a singular and not very talkative citizen," thought Gurges.

But his smiles vanished when his eyes fell on the papyrus sheet, and his face looked graver than if he had been attending a first-class funeral.

"What," he exclaimed after perusing the dangerous document, "the Emperor has read this letter as I do now? By Venus-Libitina! the poor Grand-Vestal is lost! But this is not all! Here is, if I understand it correctly, the proof of a conspiracy in favor of the divine Aurelia's betrothed! And Domitian knows all this? . . . Gurges! Gurges! these great friendships are fatal! . . . Take care that you do not get into trouble!"

"*Quidquid delirant Reges plectuntur Achivi!*"

Upon this somewhat personal reflection, the Vespillo fell into a profound meditation.

Gurges had slightly boasted when he represented himself as the Grand-Vestal's friend. He had certainly been of great service during the events we have related; but since Cornelia had returned to the *Atrium Regium*, he had not even thought of crossing the threshold of that asylum which he looked upon as prohibited to men.

His embarrassment was therefore great. How was he to discharge the important commission he had accepted? He thought of Cecilia, who was in frequent communication with the Grand-Vestal; but he promptly discarded the thought, for he did not want to involve the young woman in the dangers that might result from this affair.

"This writing burns my fingers," thought Gurges, "I can feel it now. It is enough to make a man split in four, like the log of the funerals!"

Yet, the Grand-Vestal must have this letter without delay. A bright idea must have struck Gurges suddenly, for he cut an extraordinary caper, and called aloud to his aids to prepare to accompany him.

Four vespillos responded to this call, and followed Gurges in the dark streets of Rome.

Whither were they going? We shall know it later.

CHAPTER V.

THE SONS OF DAVID.

DOMITIAN, it will be remembered, had made an appointment with Regulus for the seventh hour. When the informer arrived, the crowd of courtiers was already pouring into the Imperial palace. The heralds of the Emperor had summoned all the Senators, the four colleges of Pontiffs, the most respected Flamines, the consulars, magistrates, and many other illustrious citizens.

Flavius Clemens and his two sons, the young Cæsars, Vespasian and Domitianus, had not been forgotten. The Emperor had insisted upon their promising to attend.

Terror pervaded the groups of courtiers, for no one knew the object of this convocation, and all belonged to the conspiracy or made vows for its success. They feared that the

Emperor having discovered the plot, wished to study their faces, in the hope they would betray the guilt of the accomplices. But this made their attendance still more imperative, for their absence would have been their condemnation.

Domitian had chosen for his levee, a vast gallery supported by circular columns of the finest marble, with bronze capitals. He was seated on a chair of ivory studded with gold and precious stones. Hirsutus was rolling on a purple carpet at his master's feet.

Twenty-four lictors, clad in white tunics, surrounded the raised platform upon which the curule chair was placed, and whence Domitian's glance could study the whole assemblage. A cohort of Pretorians with bucklers and naked swords, formed a line around the columns. Their bright helmets of burnished brass, and brilliant lacernas derived additional lustre from the dark back ground of the frescoed walls.

The Emperor had donned the triumphal costume which he always wore when presiding the Senate, since his pretended victories over the Dacians. This consisted of a tunic of the finest white woolen cloth, with palms embroidered in gold; a toga of Tyrian purple ornamented with gold, and white buskins studded with pearls. A rich gold chain of delicate workmanship thrown around his neck, sustained a small gold ball containing a preservative against envy; a wreath of wild laurel encircled his brow; in his right hand he held a branch of laurel, and in his left, an ivory sceptre surmounted by the figure of an eagle. On one of the fingers of this hand he wore a plain iron ring, the ancient reward of warlike virtues; his arms were encircled in military bracelets, insigna of valor. Finally, a slave placed behind him, and almost bending under the weight, held over the Emperor's head an etruscan crown interwoven with oak-leaves of gold, acorns of precious stones and flame-colored bands.

But there was not seen around Domitian any of the symbols by means of which ancient wisdom was wont to remind the triumpher of his own weakness; neither the slave whose duty it was to cry to him from time to time: *Remember that thou art a man!* nor the rods, emblems of servitude; nor the small bell which served to announce to those condemned to death that the last hour had come—none of those means used

to keep before the eyes of the proud conqueror the proof of the instability of things human and the wretchedness which fortune might hold in reserve for the most honored and powerful.

Amidst all this pompous theatrical display, Domitian, pale and silent, gazed with pensive eyes and clouded brow on the throng of courtiers, whose names were proclaimed aloud as they approached to make their obeissance with bended knee, and to take their place, anxious and trembling, on each side of the throne.

Three persons entered, who bowed respectfully, but without prostrating themselves.

The Emperor looked up, surprised, to recognize those who had failed to give him this mark of abject submission. His eyes fell on Flavius Clemens and his two sons, the presumptive heirs of the empire.

Domitian reddened, and his eyes flashed; but he restrained his passion, and his features resumed their impenetrable mask.

An involuntary shudder, like the shock of a galvanic battery, communicated itself to the crowd of courtiers, already the prey of so much anxiety. Among the most anxious was Vibius Crispus, who knew too well the reason for the offensive reserve, so openly manifested by the Emperor's relations.

But the fears of the courtiers increased when Marcus Regulus made his appearance. The informer's demeanor was as insolent towards the assemblage as it was affectedly servile towards the Emperor. The smile of intelligence with which Domitian greeted the wretch prostrate at his feet, was full of ominous meaning. Every one felt that something terrible was about to happen.

The Emperor and the informer enjoyed together the pitiful spectacle of this universal terror.

At last, Domitian made a sign that he was about to speak. All eyes were fixed upon him; every ear listened eagerly for the words that were to relieve the general suspense.

"Consuls, senators, pontiffs and citizens," commenced the Emperor with feigned composure. "I have assembled you to witness the interrogatory to which I intend to subject two men who will soon be brought before me.

"I have long been aware that on the faith of pretended

oracles, certain bold individuals have dared to conceive culpable hopes. The empire is threatened by the secret enterprises of an odious sect. It is claimed that the sons of David, King of the Jews, are to take possession of Rome and become the masters of the universe . . ."

Here, the Emperer paused and fixed his eyes on Flavius Clemens and his two sons. Their faces expressed unfeigned astonishment, but gave no sign of the guilty emotion which would have betrayed complicity in the secret schemes alluded to by Domitian.

The Emperor's words, however, had greatly relieved the fears of the courtiers. The conspiracy was, doubtless, still shrouded in impenetrable mystery.

The Emperor continued:

"I have wished to penetrate these dark schemes. A devoted servant, Julius Fronto, has travelled over Judea and brought back to Rome the descendants of David. They are near by, awaiting my commands. Let them be brought in."

All eyes were now turned towards the herald who, upon a sign made by the Emperor, went out and soon returned with Julius Fronto, and an escort of a few soldiers in whose midst were two young men. The latter approached with downcast eyes and humble demeanor.

Domitian was so much surprised at their appearance that he arose from his seat exclaiming:

"Fronto, where are the sons of David . . .? Who are these men?"

"The sons of David are at our master's feet," replied Fronto, leading the two young men to the first step of the throne, and bowing respectfully.

The Emperor and his court gazed with astonishment upon the new comers.

The two young men wore the dress with which tradition clothe Christ and his apostles, and which has been preserved in the paintings of the great masters. They were clad in a plain tunic of coarse woollen stuff, whose ample folds fell to their feet; they were bare-headed, and their hair, parted in the middle, fell on their shoulders in long, thick curls; their feet were protected by sandals fastened with thongs of raw-hide; and each carried a long, knotty staff, shaped like a shepherd's crook.

When we add to this singular dress the dark complexion due to the burning sun of Judea; the black, flashing eyes, veiled by long, silky lashes, and the muscular development of these youthful forms, resulting from hard, daily labor in the fields, we may understand the surprise of Domitian and his courtiers at the sight of these poor young men suddenly brought in the midst of the brilliant crowd who expected to recognize in them the descendants of a king!

It was over a year since Domitian, alarmed by the prophecies contained in the sibylline books and by the rumors which had been spread in Rome relative to the Jews and the heirs of their kings, had sent Julius Fronto to Judea, to hunt up the sons of David and bring them before him, if any still existed.

On his arrival in Judea, Julius Fronto inquired diligently into every circumstance that could put him on the track of those he sought, but it was only after a good deal of trouble and fruitless search that he discovered them. The last descendants of the race of David, having been already tormented by order of Vespasian who had felt the same fears now entertained by Domitian, were hiding to avoid persecution.

They were the grand-sons of the apostle St. Jude, the brother of St. James-the-Minor, both relatives of Jesus Christ, and last scions of the illustrious family which conquest and usurpation had dispossessed of the throne.

These young men resided in the vicinity of Jerusalem, leading the humble life of the ancient pastors, and cultivating the soil with their own hands. It was there Julius Fronto, guided by an informer, found them. The astonishment of the two brothers when Domitian's messenger announced to them that they must follow him to Rome, there to give account of their ambitious projects to the Emperor, may be imagined. Never had the thought of worldly greatness entered those simple hearts; never had the presentiment of higher destinies disturbed the peace of mind of those Christians who disdained the vain honors of the world. They had to obey, however. They arrived in Rome about the time Domitian returned from the war against the Dacians.

The Emperor, amidst the enjoyments of triumph, had forgotten the mission confided to Fronto, and did not inquire into its result; but when Regulus spoke to him of Christianity

and its progress in his own family; when he saw that singular letter of Metellus Celer, in which mention was made of the advent of two Christian princes to the imperial power, his heart was troubled with its old anxiety, revived and increased by these new developments. It was in vain Marcus Regulus affirmed that the letter referred to the sons of Flavius Clemens; Domitian saw a strange coincidence between the decrees of fate which promised Rome and the universe to the Jews, and this conspiracy which seemed to announce the early realization of these mysterious events.

In this perplexity the Emperor suddenly remembered that Julius Fronto had returned, and he resolved to interrogate immediately those whom his agent must have doubtless brought with him. This is why we now find the Emperor Domitian and the sons of David in presence.

The former, in all the pomp of the apparel borrowed from Jupiter, the king of the gods!

The latter, in all the poverty of the garments of Christ, the God made man!

When Julius Fronto, bowing a second time, repeated:

"Yes, my lord, these are the sons of David!"

Domitian laughed aloud, and the echoes of the gallery resounded with this merriment of the master, continued with exaggeration by the foolish multitude of courtiers.

And yet, a silent homage was paid to these two poor children. When, surprised at this unexpected explosion of insulting contempt, they looked up, they saw, standing near the Emperor, Flavius Clemens and his noble sons, who, indignant at the outrage offered to the relations of Christ, contemplated them with deep emotion and sympathy.

Domitian began their interrogatory:

"You are the sons of David who was King of the Jews?" asked the Emperor.

But the two young men remained mute; they did not understand the language of the Romans, a fact forgotten by Domitian, in his haste. A man stepped out from the crowd of courtiers and offered to translate their answers. This was Vespasian's celebrated prisoner, Josephus. Domitian honored him for his vast knowledge, and also, perhaps, on account of his well-known hatred against the Christians.

Josephus repeated the Emperor's question in Hebrew. It was six months since the poor exiles had heard their dear

native tongue. These sweet sounds gave them new confidence, and their noble countenances became radiant as they turned to look at this stranger who spoke the language of Solyma.

"Yes, we are the sons of David," they replied together.

Josephus translated this answer.

"Have you any property!" asked Domitian.

"They declare," said Josephus, "that they possess jointly, land valued at nine thousand deniers, and which they cultivate with their own hands."

"You aspire to the empire?" asked Domitian in a tone of irony.

When Josephus had translated this question, the two brothers made no reply, but they looked at the Emperor, and with a significant gesture, showed him their callous hands and poor garments, as if to say that labor was the sole preoccupation of their humble life.

"Yet," said Domitian, "your books speak of the kingdom of Christ, which it is claimed, will belong to David's posterity? . . . What does this mean?"

When Josephus translated this question, Jude, the elder brother, replied:

"Yes, it is true, the Kingdom of Christ is promised to the children of David, that is to all those who will fulfill the law and keep the commandents; the others will be excluded."

"And where is that kingdom?" asked Domitian.

"It is everywhere and nowhere," replied James, the second brother, through the interpreter.

"How can that be?" said Domitian, with astonishment.

The two young men, pointing to heaven, replied:

"It is everywhere because one may conquer it in any country; it is nowhere because it is not of this world, but in Heaven!"

"And it is this kingdom you are seeking?" continued the Emperor, greatly relieved.

"Yes," replied Jude and James, "we seek it with all who are our brethren in the faith."

"Are not these the men called Christians?" remarked Domitian, giving a glance of intelligence to Regulus, and turning towards Flavius Clemens and his two sons, upon whose faces could be read a sympathetic admiration for the candor and simplicity of this language so full of calm assurance.

"They are all men who wish to come with us," replied James.

And Jude added:

"The God we adore is great enough to multiply his gifts. He will give His crowns to all who love Him."

"Who taught you this?" resumed the Emperor.

"Christ and the apostles chosen by Him. Our ancestor died to gain Heaven," replied the two brothers.

"Must one then die to obtain those crowns of which you speak?"

"Doubtless, since God gives them not for a time, but for eternity. However, a day will come when Christ will manifest himself in all his glory, and appear to judge the living and the dead."

"Is this day near?" asked Domitian.

"We do not know," said the two young men; "when it comes it will be the consummation of ages."

"So, you desire nothing in this world, and you wait for death to enjoy the great things that have been promised you? . . ."

"We wait until our God, calling us to Him, will show us His salvation, and our confidence will not be deceived . . . But, at present, we wish to see Jerusalem, our flocks and the fields we cultivate . . ."

The two brothers were deeply moved, and they looked beseechingly at the Emperor as they spoke these last words.

"That may be done," said Domitian, who no longer feared these two poor lads. "Have they stated the truth?" he resumed, addressing Josephus.

"Yes, my lord," replied the Pharisian, who had recently written the magnificent eulogy of Christ, which we find in his works. "Him they call Jesus and whom they adore as the Messiah announced in our books, said, during his life, that his kingdom was not of this world, . . . and his disciples aspire, in fact, only to eternal goods."

The hatred Josephus bore the Christians was merely philosophical; as a Jew and as a son of the Macchabees, he venerated, moreover, the last descendants of the race of David. He strove, therefore, to increase by his answer the interest which the Emperor began to manifest towards these illustrious and humble young men.

Domitian having no further questions to ask, ordered Julius Fronto to take away those sons of David who no longer gave him uneasiness.

When the two brothers left the imperial gallery, no sarcastic laughter was heard, but the eyes of the courtiers followed their retreating forms with secret admiration. These poor Jews, by the sublime simplicity of their language and the unknown elevation of their answers had proved that their wretched garments concealed a greatness worthy of the scions of a royal race.

A general silence followed their departure. Domitian, like his courtiers, was evidently under the influence of those strange words spoken for the first time in the imperial palace. Those who watched every motion of the Emperor remarked that his looks went from Regulus to Flavius Clemens and the two young Cæsars upon whom he gazed with a sort of stupor.

For a long time he remained thoughtful, revolving in his mind some secret question. At last he broke this painful silence by asking Flavius Clemens.

"Do you know the projects of Lucius Antonius?"

This abrupt question sent a shudder through the assemblage; but Flavius Clemens heard it without emotion. He did not even observe the angry look with which Domitian accompanied it, and replied quietly:

"No, my lord, I do not. I believe Lucius Antonius is in Germany laboring to protect the empire against the barbarians, and sustain the honor of the Roman arms."

"Lucius Antonius is a traitor!" exclaimed Domitian, unable to control himself any longer. "He has raised the standard of rebellion and wants to march upon Rome! . . . But his schemes are discovered and measures have been taken to defeat them," he added, casting angry looks on the terror-stricken courtiers.

"I was not aware of this," said Flavius Clemens, gravely.

"Have you not read the proclamations posted during the night by his bold agents?" asked Domitian.

"I have read those proclamations, and deeply deplored the act," replied Flavius Clemens. "But, as they bear no signature and indicate no seditious plans, I could neither imagine they were the work of Lucius Antonius, nor suspect an insurrection of his legions."

"Flavius," said the Emperor, "are you ready to march with me against that rebel?"

"My arm and my blood belong to the prince. . . I shall follow you with joy, my lord, and shall fight with all my might at your side. . ."

"My lord," cried together, Vespasian and Domitianus, "permit us to accompany our father, and to make our first campaign against Lucius Antonius!"

The Emperor made no reply to this request, although he examined attentively the candid features of the two young men. But turning to the courtiers:

"My will," he said, "is to leave Rome within eight days to surprise the traitor Antonius in his first projects. Let each of you"—and he repeated the words with emphasis—"let each of you hold himself in readiness to follow me . . . Greeting. . . "

Upon this word, which meant that the Emperor wished to be alone, the courtiers hastened to leave the gallery, carrying in their hearts a terrible fear, and the presentiment of the vengeance which Domitian reserved for a later day. The lictors and the pretorians, obeying a sign of the Emperor, followed the crowd, and Domitian remained alone with Regulus and Hirsutus, who, lying at his master's feet, was playing with a magnificent dog of Gallic race, and seemed to look with indifference on what had taken place.

"Well, Regulus, what do you think of this?" asked the Emperor.

"Well, my lord," replied Regulus, "you need have no uneasiness concerning these sons of David. Did I not tell you that those oracles mean nothing? The danger is not in that quarter. . ."

"Where is it, then?"

"My lord, did you observe the faces of those who surrounded you? What anxiety they expressed at first? What joy when they thought you knew nothing of the conspiracy? But what confusion when you mentioned the name of Lucius Antonius! . . .By Jupiter! all these people conspire with him . . . "

"It is so," said Domitian, gloomily. "But what do you think of Flavius Clemens and his two sons?"

"They have shown more cunning than the others, that is all . . . All those Jews can dissemble with incredible per-

fidy . . . for, after all, my lord, you have read Metellus Celer's letter which leaves no doubt . . . "

But the Emperor here interrupted Regulus, pointing at Hirsutus, whom it was perhaps imprudent to initiate into these matters.

The lad, who saw this gesture, laughed hideously, distending his mouth in a fearful manner.

"What is the matter, Hirsutus?" asked Domitian.

"The matter is that my hand hurts me dreadfully, and I am relieving the pain in my own way," replied the dwarf, in a rough tone.

"What shall I do?" resumed the Emperor, addressing Regulus.

"My lord, you should act like the Jews, that is dissimulate . . . At present, severity might be dangerous, but after the rebellion is crushed, we shall have the names of the accomplices, and then . . ."

Domitian made again a sign of caution.

"It is true, my lord, I am the first to forget the prudence I had recommended. . . But we had better interrupt this conversation," added Regulus, bowing respectfully, "my lord, you may always rely on my zeal . . . I shall soon give you new proofs of it. . ."

And the informer withdrew. Domitian left the gallery, soon after, followed by Hirsutus. The dwarf had not lost a single word of the conversation between the Emperor and Regulus. It seemed to have suggested to him some new design, which he was now revolving in his mind.

The Emperor was even more embarrassed than Hirsutus. The necessity of crushing the rebellion in Germany in its incipient state, would require him to leave Rome immediately, and therefore compel him to delay his vengeance until he should have gained a victory over the rebels. He could not persecute his relations now, without danger; for, if they belonged to the conspiracy, their arrest might hasten an outbreak in Rome, and if they were strangers to it, the mere fact of their being Christians would not justify their punishment. The Jews, hated and despised, were not, however, looked upon as criminals worthy of death.

He left Rome, accompanied by the whole Senate.

On the same day, a ship was leaving the port of Pozzuolo,

having on board the sons of David. They were returning to their home in Judea.

Before returning to our principal heroines, we must explain two important facts: How Regulus had obtained the documents brought by him to Domitian; and where Gurges was going with Metellus Celer's letter to the Grand-Vestal.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE TEMPLE OF ISIS.

ON the morning of the day when the first proclamation of Lucius Antonius was found posted on the walls of Rome and carried to Domitian by the Senator Palfurius Sura, a young woman could have been seen issuing from a house of modest appearance, situated near the Catulania gate, and descending hurriedly the public highway, despite the early hour and the threatening clouds which overhung the sky.

She was of small stature, and seemed of humble condition, if one could judge from the simplicity of her attire, and from the fact that she went out on foot and alone, which was not customary with Roman ladies of some rank. To protect herself from the damp air, she wore the *impluviatum*, a sort of cloak for rainy weather, and under this, the *regilla*, a long tunic which could replace the stole. A thick veil concealed half her face, but the beauty of the visible half would have satisfied the most fastidious.

Upon leaving the house, the young woman looked disappointedly at the condition of the sky, and she even paused, uncertain, but her business must have admitted of no delay, for she pushed on bravely. Having crossed the Capitulania gate, looking round carefully to see if she was watched, she reascended, after turning to the left, as far as the *Lata* way which she followed some distance, then, abruptly turning again to the left, she crossed the porticoes of the *Septa Julia* in all their width. A few moments later she stood opposite two large edifices situated parallelly near to each other, above and below Agrippa's baths. These two edifices were the temples of Isis and Serapis. In front of the latter was an

obelisk constructed of red granite, and eighteen feet high, and two marble lions.

There was also an obelisk in front of the temple of Isis, and two colossal statues of the gods who presided over the Nile and the Tiber. The Nile god was leaning on a she-wolf which was suckling Romulus and Remus; the Tiber reclined on a sphynx. Each river-god held a cornucopia full of fruits. These two groups were carved from blocks of the finest white marble.

A flight of broad marble steps led to the temple of Isis on the side fronting the *Septa Julia*. It opened on a court surrounded with magnificent porticoes, in the centre of which was the temple consecrated to the Egyptian divinity. At the furthest end of the court were the habitations of the priests in charge of the temple. These buildings communicated on the rear with some fine gardens, known as "the gardens of Isis," and which extended to Agrippa's baths.

Before ascending the steps, the young woman looked round to see if she had been followed; but the *Septa Julia* was deserted at this early hour. Gathering the folds of her impluviatum and slightly raising her regilla, she then ran up the steps rapidly; a performance which would have gratified an early riser with the sight of the neatest little foot the proudest matron could ever boast of. The little woman crossed the porticoes with the same haste, and without stopping at the temple, from whose open doors loud voices and noisy instruments were heard, she ran to the buildings occupied by the priests, and knocked at the door of the middle one.

After some delay, heavy steps were heard approaching; one of the panels of the door slid back on a groove, and the horrible face of an old woman filled the aperture.

Many matrons would have drawn back in alarm at this fearful apparition; but our unknown must have been accustomed to the sight, for she manifested no surprise.

"Enothea," she asked, addressing the old hag with easy familiarity, "is not the Archigallus at home?"

"Now then!" exclaimed the hag, instead of answering the simple question propounded, "here is another one who does not know that the Archigallus is never at home at this hour! . . . By Isis! . . . Did you not see that the temple is open? Did you not hear the noise of the ceremony? . . . Go there, if you wish to accuse yourself!"

"Enothea," remarked the young woman in a tone of just displeasure; "is this the way to speak to me? I know the Archigallus is in the temple at this hour. . . But I come for another motive. . . Apollo will be satisfied, indeed, when he learns how you have received me!"

The hag, who had already drawn back her head thrust it again in the aperture:

"What do you want?" she asked roughly.

"This is astonishing?" exclaimed the unknown. But this is not the first time I have come to speak in private to the Archigallus! . . . and regarding matters which brook no delay! . . ."

"Then you must come back at the sixth hour. The Archigallus is never free until that time, and even then, it is the hour he takes his nap;" replied Enothea crossly.

"At least," insisted the young woman, "do not fail to tell him it is Gellia, the wife of Misitius, who wishes to have a secret interview with him. This is very important!"

"He shall be told," replied doggedly the hag, and she closed the panel in the face of the little matron, whose name we now know.

Gellia, more than dissatisfied with this reception, ran down the marble steps as rapidly as she had ascended them, but instead of returning the way she had come, she took the road which ran near the Flaminius Circus, passed Pompey's theatre, and stopped only when she reached the Tiber, between the Janiculum bridge and the Vatican or Triumphal bridge, thus named, because it led to the wide and long street through which triumphers ascended to the capitol.

The shore of the river and the vast plain depending of the the Campus Martius, used as a race course once a year, presented the most extraordinary spectacle when Gellia arrived.

Through the dense fog occasioned by the dampness of the weather, the eye could discover the dim forms of three or four hundred women of all conditions, who, singly or in groups, were performing the most singular exercises. Some, descending near the river's edge, with their long hair loosened, plunged in their heads three times, notwithstanding the icy coldness of the water. Others,—and they were the most numerous—raising their garments as high as the knee, knelt on the hard ground and painfully dragged themselves for-

ward, beating their breasts, and invoking the gods aloud. Their knees, torn by the sharp pebbles, left bloody tracks on the sand; some would fall, exhausted and faint, but gathering new courage, they would resume their painful task until the whole distance was accomplished.

Gellia, with her habitual vivacity of manner, went straight to the Tiber and dipped her hand in the water. She withdrew it quickly, making a very wry face, disappointed in finding it so cold. But the little woman had made up her mind and would not be deterred by so trifling a matter. She took off her veil, and her raven black hair fell loose on her shoulders; she shook off her impluviatum and remained protected only by her regilla—an animated copy of the statue of alarmed Modesty. Then, kneeling on the margin of the shore she resolutely dipped her head three times.

The ablution ended, the little matron drew from her pocket a snow-white woolen towel and carefully wiped her face and her long hair, which she smoothed with a shell comb, consulting attentively a small mirror of polished steel. Satisfied with the examination, she resumed her impluviatum and her veil. But this was not all. Raising slightly her regilla, she now knelt on the sand in the rear of the long file of penitents and proceeded to imitate them in the performance we have already described.

All these matrons were *penitents* of the Archigallus and other priests of the temple of Isis, fulfilling the penalties prescribed by them. Gellia, one of the most devoted, had come to perform the double penance in order to liquidate her debt entirely before calling on the Archigallus. Juvenal has described the mysteries of Isis. He will be our guide in our visit to the temple.

Women alone were admitted into the sanctuary, where the priests assembled around the altars of the goddess.

In the centre of the sanctuary there was a statue of Isis standing on the terestrial globe, with this inscription:

I am all that has been, all that is, all that will be.

On another altar a silver serpent was represented, entwined around a leafless tree.

Are not the words of this inscription the same spoken by Jehovah from the burning bush in Horeb? And is not this serpent a reminiscence of that shown by Moses to the people in the wilderness?

But discordant sounds fill the sanctuary. The priests (gallii) are uttering frantic yells and beating their drums or clashing their cymbals. Some simulate madness; others in prey to a real phrenzy, bruise their limbs and tear their flesh. The Archigallus commands silence, and every noise is hushed. He raises his voice and addresses his feminine audience.

He threatens with the most dire calamities those who will remain indifferent to his warnings or rebellious against his counsels. The only means of avoiding these fearful evils is to purchase forgiveness by offerings or to submit to expiations.

He pauses and the horrible noise is renewed, the phrensy of the priests becomes uncontrollable. Again he commands silence, and speaks:

"Who is she, who has violated the sacred precept and has failed to observe the consecrated days?" exclaims the Archigallus in a solemn voice. "Let her accuse herself and implore forgiveness! . . ."

He points at the silver serpent, and, O wonder! the reptile moves, its mouth opens, its eyes flash!

"Is there no woman here who has transgressed the rules and who wishes to be pardoned?"

This second invitation is received in silence; the assemblage seems struck with stupor. At last a woman makes a sign, and moves towards the Archigallus who hastens to meet her. He leans towards her and she whispers in his ear the story of her faults. Then, the Archigallus leads her to the altar, and both kneel before the silver serpent. The eyes of the priest are filled with tears, his lips speak words of supplication. He implores forgiveness for the penitent at his side.

He then rises and announces in a loud voice that an offering will be made and a severe penance imposed. A priest brings forward the gifts presented by the repentant woman. They consist in a fine goose and large, flat cakes of a rounded shape. The Archigallus presents these gifts to the serpent. He declares that the penitent shall thrice plunge her head into the cold water of the Tiber during the early hours of the day; or that she shall crawl round the Campus Martius on her bare knees; or, even if Isis orders it, she shall go to the confines of Egypt, in the island of Meroe to bring back water from the hot and salutary springs, which shall be poured into the temple. All the priests join in supplications to the divinity to

look leniently upon the faults redeemed by repentance and pious gifts. The serpent, which has remained long motionless, moves at last its head in token of pardon.

Such, at least, is the interpretation given by the priests to a slight motion of the serpent's head towards the prostrate woman. They sing "Io! Io!" and utter cries of triumph.

The Archigallus proclaims that the divinity is satisfied, provided the penance imposed is fulfilled.

The example of this repentant matron is followed by others, and the same ceremony is repeated again and again. Each woman listening to the Archigallus as if Isis herself spoke, and believing herself fully pardoned provided she fulfills her penance.

We shall now return to the lively Gellia. The pretty little matron could see no better way to while away time than a little shopping excursion among the fashionable establishments of the *Septa Julia*. The hour appointed to meet the Archigallus finds her thus pleasantly engaged. She hurries off to the temple, and knocks once more at the door with the sliding panel.

The heavy steps are again heard, and Enothea's ugly face shows itself in the aperture.

"Enothea," inquired Gellia, "the mysteries must be ended, and Apollo is doubtless waiting for me?"

"Come in," replied the old woman, with her accustomed roughness.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARCHIGALLUS APOLLO.

APOLLO, the Archigallus and flamine of Cybele and Isis, was a man of a fine, commanding appearance. He was about sixty years old, and his long white hair gave him a very venerable look. He wore no beard. His rosy cheeks and double chin denoted the man who makes a proper use of the good things of this world. This healthy appearance formed a contrast with that of the thin-visaged, half-starved *gallii*, his subordinates, with whom he shared the geese and

cakes offered by their penitents. The priests received no support from the state, and had to rely on the liberality or charity of the citizens. The only exceptions to this rule were in the case of the Vestals, and the Pontiffs who were of a higher order than the Flamines.

If Apollo had had no other resources than the perquisites of the temple, he might have been reduced, like many of his colleagues, to travel about the country, with a small donkey to carry his baggage, and a statue of Cybele to provoke the pious generosity of his dupes. But Apollo had Enothea.

This fearfully ugly old woman was the secret power of the priest's house. She found great advantages in living under his roof, and in return, had arranged for him an existence of ease and plenty.

She prepared all sorts of medicinal powders and draughts, which she sold at a very good price. Nobody could conduct more skillfully an intrigue, and derive greater benefits from the necessities of others. She manufactured, with remarkable art, the numerous charms so eagerly sought by the superstitious Roman matrons; and she had for sale a complete collection of statues of the "little gods," whose number had become so greatly multiplied by the vain, fearful, ambitious or voluptuous passions of the people. She added to these resources the secret sale of sacred offerings, magical consultations, nocturnal incantations and a thousand other traffics.

Enothea lived between the Archigallus, whose priestly character increased her influence, a large black cat which she used in her incantations, and a big old gander whose vigilance was excelled only by its boldness. This bird, more irritable than a watch-dog, would scarcely permit a stranger to cross the threshold of the house; more than one matron had had her stole torn by its sharp bill; more than one citizen had fled, his calves bruised by the repeated blows of wings that struck as hard as a flail.

This is what happened when the lively Gellia entered the atrium. The big gander, suddenly disturbed, rushed upon her furiously, its neck stretched, its terrible bill open, and its wings spread out like the sails of a ship.

But Gellia knew the gander, whose attacks she had felt more than once, and she had sworn to punish it. Perceiving on a stone bench near by, a long sharp knife with which

Enothea had been carving the bust of some god, she seized it hastily, and struck such a furious blow at the ugly bird that she completely severed its head.

The lamentable cries uttered by Enothea, when she saw the sacred gander lying on the ground, a bleeding and lifeless mass, alarmed the Archigallus and brought him out of the house. When he saw Gellia still brandishing the bloody knife, the gander lying in the last struggles of death, and the old hag tearing her hair and calling vengeance upon the head of the young woman, Apollo could not restrain a smile of secret satisfaction. He had often suffered from the attacks of the wicked gander, who respected only Enothea, and it was clear that the bird's sudden death gave him no displeasure. Yet, out of regard for the witch, he thought proper to say to Gellia:

"What you have done is very wrong! Quite wrong, indeed! . . . This goose was sacred! . . ."

"Should I have allowed myself to be torn to pieces by that ugly bird," replied Gellia. "The last time I came here, it carried off the hem of my regilla, and my ankle was bruised black and blue, by its wings. . . . But let the sacred goose alone," she added, giving Enothea a mocking smile, "Apollo, I want to speak to you of very important matters."

The Archigallus, paying no further attention to the lamentations of Enothea, who was pressing her beloved gander in her arms and endeavoring to restore him to life with magic words, hastened to introduce the young woman into a private room where they could converse unheard. This was not the first time Gellia had called to consult the Archigallus on the matter that troubled her, and he was anxious to learn more on the subject.

Gellia had commenced by entertaining Apollo with some little grievances concerning her husband, but he was not long discovering that there was something more important than matrimonial bickerings. Misitius, the tender husband, had suddenly become gloomy, taciturn and intractable; he went out frequently at night, and Gellia had not been able to ascertain whither he went. He had mysterious interviews with people who appeared and disappeared abruptly; he was continually receiving messages, and would then shut himself up, for hours, in the most private room in the house; all that

Gellia had discovered was that he had made numerous copies of the flying sheets left him by his visitors.

Once Misitius had been absent a whole month. Where had he been? What had he done during that time? He would not tell her! But he had returned more anxious and morose than he had ever been. Another time, a man dressed in a toga of mourning, and wrapped in the folds of a wide pallium, had sought shelter in their house, in the middle of the night. Misitius had received him with every mark of respectful deference, but during the two days that this stranger remained, Gellia had been compelled to leave the house and to seek the hospitality of a friend.

In fine, the young woman, thus neglected, and made unhappy by the unaccountable change in her husband, had felt the need of some friend to whom she could confide her troubles; and she had naturally selected Apollo, who enjoyed the confidence of so many matrons. The curiosity with which the Archigallus listened to her complaints, had gradually changed into a lively interest in those mysteries, and he anxiously expected their unraveling. He suspected the cause, and without revealing it to Gellia, he had encouraged her to make further discoveries and further revelations.

When they reached the private room and were secured from interruption, the Archigallus hastened to ask Gellia:

"Well, what news?"

"I come," said she, "from the Tiberine field, where I have fulfilled my two expiations. You had reproached me so severely, the last time, for having neglected them."

"This is quite right, quite right," repeated the Archigallus, "for you had procrastinated long enough. . . But, what else?"

"Here is what I found last night," replied Gellia, handing him a crumpled sheet of papyrus.

It was a copy of the first proclamation sent by Lucius Antonius, which had been affixed to the walls of Rome during that same night. Apollo gave a start of surprise as he read this document.

"How did you manage to get possession of this?" he asked Gellia.

"Misitius went out at dusk, day before yesterday, and returned in the middle of the night, carrying a large pack-

age securely tied up in emporetic papyrus. He did not go to bed, and all day, yesterday, he was doing some secret work, writing continually. From time to time there came strangers to see him, who went away almost immediately, doubtless with copies handed them by my husband, for one of them, as he went out, dropped this one which I picked up to bring to you. . . Misitus went out again last night. . . and this morning, when I left home, he had not yet returned."

"Do you know," said the Archigallus, "that Misitius would be a ruined man if the Emperor saw this libel?"

"You think so?" asked the young woman artlessly.

Apollo looked at her with astonishment.

"Have you not then read this document?" he asked.

"Certainly I have. . . I saw that much ill is said of the Emperor. . . But I am so careless that I have not given much attention to this. . . Besides, how can the Emperor know of the existence of this document?"

Gellia, as well as the Archigallus, was not aware that many copies had been affixed to the walls of Rome.

"Oh! the Emperor knows a great many things," remarked Apollo in a singular tone; and he added abruptly: "Suppose Misitius was a conspirator?" ?

"Misitius a conspirator!" exclaimed the young woman, growing pale at this sudden revelation.

"Yes, a conspirator," repeated the Archigallus. "Otherwise what is the meaning of all these mysteries you have told me about? those sudden departures and as sudden returns. . . those people who come and go. . . that silent and solitary task. . . those multiplied copies of mysterious documents? . ."

"Oh! I see it now . . . I see it now," cried Gellia, and she sank on her knees, sobbing bitterly, "Misitius is lost!"

"No, he will not be lost," said the Archigallus thoughtfully. "I know a means to save him. . ."

"What is it?" asked the young woman, trembling with anxiety.

"I cannot say yet," replied Apollo, "but you will know it to-day. . . Leave this document with me, and retire to your house," he added solemnly, "I must think over this. . ."

Gellia, somewhat comforted by his promise, took leave of the priest of Isis. Had she been less absorbed in her grief, she might have seen, as she crossed the atrium, the fearful

Enothea standing in a threatening attitude, and muttering the words of a myst rious invocation, as she threw on the path of the young woman the withered leaves of some magical plant. But poor little Gellia had too much anguish in her heart, and her eyes were too wet with tears, to permit her seeing the old hag. She went back slowly by the road she had followed so briskly that morning, and reached her humble home.

Misitius had just returned.

Immediately after Gellia's departure, the Archigallus went out, telling Enothea that he could be found at Eutrapeles' barber shop, if any one wanted to see him. It was Apollo's daily habit to listen to the barber's gossip whilst having his locks perfumed.

But when the flamine came in sight of Eutrapeles' shop, it seemed to him that an unusually large crowd besieged that fashionable establishment. Such was the case, in fact, and the Archigallus, when he got nearer, saw a singular spectacle. Eutrapeles was struggling to get away from a centurion, and protesting aloud that he was not the author of the proclamation. Struck by these words, Apollo inquired why the barber was being arrested. He was told that a copy of the proclamation had been pasted on Eutrapeles' wall during the night; a crowd had assembled to read it; and a pretorian had torn the paper from the wall and taken it to his centurion, who had come to arrest Eutrapeles, holding him responsible for the insult publicly offered the Emperor.

"Very well," said the Archigallus, "I must try to help the poor barber out of this scrape." And pushing his way through the crowd, he approached the centurion.

"Will you permit me," said he, "to see the document which our friend Eutrapeles, usually so devoted to the Emperor, is accused of having written?"

The officer gave the Archigallus one of the fragments.

"It is as I thought," said Apollo, who immediately recognized the handwriting of Misitius and the wording of the proclamation. "Centurion," he added, "do not trouble our poor Eutrapeles any longer; the author of this abominable diffamation is known, and that great citizen, Marcus Regulus, will give a good account of the whole affair to the Emperor."

No one, in Rome, would have dared to doubt the public

and solemn affirmation of a priest. The centurion bowed, and released the barber.

Eutrapeles was so delighted by this happy turn of the adventure, that he would have willingly poured his whole stock of precious essences on Apollo's head. However, he embraced him most lovingly, which was a less expensive way of showing his gratitude.

"Eutrapeles," whispered the flamine in his ear, "shut up your shop and let us go in immediately. . . I have something important to tell you."

The barber hastened to comply with this request, and the crowd dispersed, much disappointed.

"My good friend," said the Archigallus when they were alone, "You must go immediately to Regulus. You will tell him simply that it is Misitius, the flute player at the sacrifices, who receives and distributes these proclamations."

And he drew from the folds of his sacerdotal robe the copy given him by Gellia. The astonished barber looked on inquiringly.

"This is all I know," added the Archigallus, who understood this mute interpellation. "But Regulus is a great man. . . he will know what to do. Good-bye, Eutrapeles, you should not lose a moment." And they parted.

Thus is explained a great event that caused much wonder among the barber's fashionable customers, to wit: the closing up during half a day of Eutrapeles' tonsorial establishment.

CHAPTER VIII.

ILLUSIONS OF A CONSPIRATOR.

WE have stated that on Gellia's arrival home, she had found Misitius who had just returned from his mysterious journey.

"At last, Misitius," said the young woman, "we must have an explanation."

"An explanation? concerning what?" asked Misitius gloomily.

"Misitius, you conspire!" exclaimed Gellia, amidst a flood of tears.

And as Misitius made a gesture of denial.

"Yes, you conspire," she repeated in a peremptory tone. "I know it now. . . I have the proof of it."

"How do you know it?" asked Misitius uneasily.

"For the past three months Misitius is scarcely ever at home; Misitius neglects his wife; Misitius has dealings with suspicious people who hide; Misitius is silent, pensive, anxious, in prey to continual fear; Misitius copies seditious writings, one of which fell into my hands yesterday, and Misitius asks how I know that he conspires!" replied the little woman with great volubility.

"Oh! Gods!" sighed Mesitius, and he looked at his wife, with stupid wonder.

"You are working your ruin, Misitius, and mine also."

And Gellia, falling on a seat, hid her face in her hands and sobbed violently.

"Gellia," whispered Misitius in her ear, "in a few days we shall enjoy the greatest honors and all the blessings of wealth. . . Yes, I conspire, but is for you, my Gellia, for you alone, do you hear? They have promised me the sacerdotal rank. . . You will be the Martial Flamina?"

"Fool!" cried Gellia in a tone that stopped the flow of words of her too confiding husband. "How," she proceeded, "can you, a simple flute-player at the sacrifices, believe that they will confer upon you a dignity which in former times was the prerogative of patricians? . . ."

"Why not?" asked Misitius, "if it is given as the reward of great services rendered Rome by the overthrow of her tyrant. . ."

"That's it! that's it!" repeated Gellia, stamping the floor in a nervous manner. "The tibicine Misitius is going to overthrow the Emperor! . . . unless the Emperor should make a mouthful of this Misitius! . . . Indeed, I don't know what keeps me from wreaking my resentment on you, as I did this morning on the sacred gander of the Archigallus!"

The name of the Archigallus caused Misitius to start, but as a husband will not give up so easily the point contested by his wife, he resumed in an animated and solemn tone:

"But you are not aware that an army will soon march upon Rome. . . that the general commanding that army

waits my signal. . . that it is I who have fixed the day for the uprising. . ."

Gellia, notwithstanding her fear, looked compassionately at her husband.

"Misitius, my poor Misitius," said she, interrupting him, and there was a great tenderness in her voice, "are you insane? What is it that has disturbed your mind so? Poor man, where have you picked up these visions? . . ."

"Visions! Gellia . . . they are realities! . . ."

"So much the worse, then! . . . You are a poor fool whom wicked people have caught in a snare. . . They make use of you, Misitius! . . . But you will be the victim! . ."

"Impossible, Gellia! . . ."

"Tell me, Misitius," asked the young woman, "when you are in the theatre and you blow in your flute to accompany the actor, is it you the audience applauds?"

"Of course not. . . but. . ."

"And when you are in the temple," continued Gellia, charming the assembly with the melodious sounds of your instrument, is it to you or to the sacrificers the offerings are brought?"

"But, Gellia, what connection is there. . ."

"This one, dear Misitius: you are again playing for the benefit of others. . . The General triumphing will reap the ovations and honors, and Misitius will be forgotten. The General failing. . . . I will not say what will happen to Misitius. . ."

"What shall I say? Gellia, the die is cast," muttered Misitius, finding the argument unanswerable.

"But, fortunately," continued the little woman, "Misitius has a wife who watches over him and will save him. . . The Archigallus promised me. . ."

"Does the Archigallus know?" asked the tibicine with terror.

"The Archigallus has in his possession the document I picked up yesterday, and which is, he told me, a proclamation. . ."

But the young woman stopped in her turn, terrified by the sudden change in her husband's features. The poor flute-player had become ashy pale and was trembling in all his limbs.

"Gellia," he muttered, "you have ruined me! All will be discovered now! . . ."

"The Archigallus is an honest man!" faltered the little woman uneasily.

"Oh! the women, the women!" said Misitius dolefully. "They cannot be kept from going to those wretched Gallii! Gellia, you are not aware that I have had this proclamation distributed in Rome last night. . . and that the Archigallus is the bosom friend of the infamous Regulus. . . Do you understand now what you have done? . . ."

"Oh!" cried Gellia, throwing herself in her husband's arms, "can this be true? dear Misitius. . ."

The two young people held each other in a long embrace, mingling their sobs and not daring to communicate to each other their thoughts.

Misitius and Gellia had only been married two years. Their story is simple and touching. Both belonged to that numerous class of individuals whom the Roman laws pronounced *sui generis* at their birth, because they were considered as having no father.

Misitius' mother, who died when he was twenty years old, was a freedwoman protected by the *King of the Sacrifices.* Formerly, the Roman Kings presided in person the immolation of victims. When the republic succeeded the monarchy, this title was given to a priest, in order to preserve the ancient rite. But the name "King" was so odious, that the Sacrificer fled from the forum as soon as this ceremony was ended.

During the invocations and prayers, a flute-player accompanied the voice of the priests with the sound of his ivory instrument. The King of the Sacrifices gave this position to Misitius, who obtained a similar employment at the theatre. He guided and sustained the voice of the actors by playing on a silver flute

Young Misitius earned thereby enough to live comfortably, but he felt very lonely in the midst of that immense city of Rome, where, since his mother's death, there was no one to care for him. One evening, as he was returning home, Misitius heard some one groaning in the recess of a private portico. He approached and found, crouching in the dark, a poor young girl, who seemed in prey to the most bitter grief.

This young girl was Gellia.

She told him that on that same day her mother's corpse had

been consumed on the funeral pile, and she was now without friends or shelter, having been driven from the house by pitiless creditors. Misitius, the poor orphan, was deeply moved by this sorrowful tale. He tried to find words of comfort for a grief so much like his own, and taking her by the hand, raised the girl from her recumbent position; but hunger and sorrow had worn out her strength, and she fell senseless. The humane flute-player was not far from home; taking Gellia in his arms, he carried her into the house, and having succeeded in reviving her, offered her some food and gave up to her the litttle room he occupied.

At the end of the year, Misitius and Gellia went to the Pretor and made a public declaration that they were united by simple *usage*, an easy but legal form of marriage, the validity of which was never brought in question. The poor people knew no other mode of legitimate union; the wealthy alone could afford to claim the expensive and solemn forms of confarreation and coemption.

No married pair were more dissimilar in disposition, although closely united by mutual affection.

Gellia was quick tempered and thoughtless; Misitius was slow and vacilating, except when his imagination was seduced by fanciful appearances, for then he seized these illusions with childish eagerness, and clung to them with all the obstinacy of conviction. Gellia was superstitious; Misitius, iniated into the secrets of the temple, despised the vain science of the priests, and laughed at the faith put in the oracles. Gellia was impatient and capricious; Misitius kind and simple Gellia's mother had brought her up in luxury, and developed her coquetry; Misitius had learned from his mother to be contented with little. Whilst Gellia had but very vague desires of wealth, Misitius fed his mind on the most ambitious hopes, not for himself, but for Gellia, who frequently made thoughtless remarks about the happiness of the rich.

These two young people suited each other precisely, because they differed so completely, each having the qualities or defects which were wanting in the other. Everybody liked them; the neighbors compared Gellia to Caia, the Roman heroine of marriage; they said that Misitius loved her as Philemon loved Beaucis, and the Parcæ should cut their

thread of life on the same day. Alas! these kind wishes were not written in the book of Fate.

One evening, a stranger called and had a long conversation with Misitius. From that time, Gellia's husband was a changed man. We must explain in a few words how this was brought about.

The senators and others implicated in the conspiracy wanted a trustworthy agent in Rome, who would be their means of communicating with the General commanding the army in Germany.

This agent should be so obscure as not to attract attention, and yet so compromised as to give assurance of his fidelity. The King of the Sacrifices, who was connected with the plot, recommended his flute-player, Misitius.

The vanity and secret aspirations of the unfortunate tibicine made him an easy prey. A considerable sum of money was paid him and he was promised the rank of Martial-Flamine. Besides, the general was in direct communication with him, and apparently, at least, depended on him for all necessary information and for the signal of action. It is true that Misitius did not know the names of the conspirators; that he was but an intermediary, placed between two points, one luminous and tangible—Lucius Antonius, whom he knew; the other—the conspirators, surrounded by impenetrable darkness. But the flute-player believed himself the true head and prime mover of the conspiracy. He devoted himself, body and soul, to his secret task.

We know what followed, and how Gellia innocently betrayed her husband. The poor little woman now wept over the consequences of her imprudence; Misitius was thinking how he should save Gellia and save himself. They remained until night plunged into this intolerable anguish, and trembling at every noise.

Suddenly, a knock was heard at the door. Gellia hesitated. The knock was repeated, and a voice cried:

"From the Archigallus!"

"Ah!" said Gellia, "I remember he promised to come to our assistance ere the day ended." And she hastened to open the door.

Apollo's messenger entered, and said simply to Misitius: "Follow me."

"Is it the Archigallus who sends you?" asked the flute-player.

"The Archigallus wishes to see you concerning the writing your wife gave him this morning."

"I am ready," said Misitius, somewhat comforted by the thought that the Archigallus still had the proclamation in his possession.

Gellia felt confident. She told him as she kissed him good-by:

"You will see that Apollo did not deceive me."

Misitius had not walked very far when three men rushed upon him, threw him down, and securely tied his hands. The messenger then gave the order to proceed.

"Where are you taking me?" asked Misitius.

"You will soon know," replied the stranger.

They walked on silently, down the deserted streets, and reaching the Tiber, crossed the Palatine bridge. They were then going to Regulus' house? Doubtless, the Archigallus had betrayed Gellia's confidence.

"I am lost," thought the unfortunate Misitius, as the truth broke upon him. "May the gods grant, at least, that I may protect Gellia."

The tibicine was introduced into the exedra where we have witnessed the interview between the wily lawyer and poor old Cecilius. Regulus was seated at a table upon which were placed conspicuously a bronze bust of Domitian and a pile of gold.

"You see," said he when he was alone with Misitius—and he unrolled the copy of the proclamation, "that you are discovered. It would be useless to deny. . . Who is the author of this?"

And without waiting for an answer, he added, pointing at the pile of sestertii:

"You have the choice. . . This or the Emperor. . . do you understand me?"

Misitius made signs that he comprehended the informer's meaning. The money meant shame; the tibicine would not sell himself. The Emperor—that was death. Misitius did not want to die. He was thinking of Gellia.

"No pay!" he said resolutely to Regulus. "No money, but a guarantee."

"Of what nature?"

"Write an acknowledgement that I have divulged the plot voluntarily. Otherwise you will know nothing."

"Not bad!" remarked the informer, as he proceeded to write the acknowledgement. "You are a cunning fellow. Now," he added, as he handed him the paper, "what are the names?"

"Lucius Antonius," said the tibicine, after reading the document and securing it under his tunic.

"What! Lucius Antonius, the General of the army of Germany!" exclaimed Regulus. "It is then a rebellion?"

"Yes," said Misitius.

"Who are his accomplices in Rome?"

"I do not know," replied Misitius; and he explained his singular position as the agent of an unknown body.

"This is a skillful arrangement," remarked Regulus; "in this way one may conspire without danger. But we shall manage to find them out. However, how do I know that you tell the truth about this revolt? I must have a proof."

"You will have one to-morrow night."

"How is that?"

"If you will be at the twelfth hour on the Flaminia way, near Garden-hill. A courier from Germany will bring me dispatches."

"I shall be there," exclaimed Regulus.

"Am I free to go?" asked Misitius.

"Entirely so. Good-by till to-morrow night."

"Good-by, my lord, till to-morrow night."

An hour later, Misitius was in Gellia's arms.

"We are saved," he said to her, "but your Archigallus is an infamous rascal! He had betrayed me to Regulus. . . . Finding it impossible to deny, I have been compelled to avow all. . . Take good care of this declaration signed by Regulus. . . Who knows but we may want it at some later day?"

On the following night, Regulus, concealed on the Flaminia way, received from Misitius the package of dispatches from Germany. With what joyful surprise the wretch discovered, amidst those important documents, the letter written by Metellus Celer to the Grand-Vestal, which, while it gave a proof of their intimacy, revealed, moreover, the object of Antonius' conspiracy.

"Ah!" said Regulus, smiling, "the gods protect me! This letter gives me a new hold upon the Vestal and those Christians who might have escaped. The Emperor may send for me, now. . . I no longer fear having to remain silent before his anger!"

We have seen that Domitian sent for Regulus, and what use the latter made of the documents received from Misitius. We shall now seek Gurges, whom we have left much embarrassed with Metellus Celer's letter, which he had undertaken to deliver to Cornelia.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUNERAL OF A CHRISTIAN VIRGIN.

WHEN perchance an idea saw the light in the brain of our friend Gurges, one could affirm that it was an original and remarkable idea. Here is the reasoning by which Gurges got rid of his dilemma.

"If," he thought, "I get Cecilia to carry this papyrus to the Grand-Vestal, I plunge her anew in the greatest dangers. . . Now, I love Cecilia too much, notwithstanding that she is the wife of Olinthus, to expose her again to persecution. What shall I do?"

Here, Gurges paused and scratched his head.

"Ah!" he suddenly exclaimed, "I've got it! . . . Yes, that's it! . . . I like this pontiff of the Christians! I have seen him at work! . . . It seemed to me that he felt an interest in the Grand-Vestal. . . There is besides in this letter something that concerns the young Cæsars, to whom he is said to be related. Suppose I were to intrust him with this delicate mission? . . ."

Upon this, Gurges, who seldom wasted much time in reflection, cut a joyful caper, and called aloud to his vespillos, who presented themselves forthwith, bearing torches.

"Forward to the Capena-gate," cried Gurges.

Two men preceded him to light the way, and the party set out briskly. They passed the Capena-gate, and entered the Appian way, which they were to follow some distance to reach the ancient grove of the Muses where the wretched huts of the Christians were built.

Here, Gurges had a bad fright. The torches of an escort coming from the opposite direction, suddenly illumed the darkness, and in the silence of the night, this challenge resounded:

"Triumvir Capital! . . . Who goes there?"

It was the triumvir, going his rounds who, perceiving the light of torches at this unseasonable hour, had ordered the party to be challenged. Now, Gurges had had more than once, trouble with the Triumvir capital. In his nocturnal expeditions, during the time he was a vespillo, he had often been stopped by this chief of the urban police, and searched for such prohibited articles as human hair and teeth—spoils robbed from the grave by the vespillos. But never had the encounter caused him so much uneasiness.

"If this triumvir proceeds to search my person as usual," thought Gurges, with a certain tremor, "what will become of the Grand-Vestal's letter? . . . What will become of me? . . . "

The danger became imminent, for the triumvir, obtaining no reply, was galloping towards the suspicious party.

"Who goes there?" he repeated, when he was about twenty steps from them.

"Gurges!" replied the son of Tongilianus, almost firmly.

"Gurges, the designator?" asked the triumvir. Ah! now I understand . . . They are waiting for you over yonder! . . . Pass on! . . . "

Gurges hastened to avail himself of this permission, but he could not get over his astonishment at the facility of his escape, and at the words spoken by the triumvir.

"This triumvir understands," he muttered, "that is very well! . . . but what is it that he understands? . . . They wait for me over yonder! . . . That is not likely! . . . By Venus-Libitina! my intellect is at fault . . . Well, never mind, that is of no importance . . . let us make haste, lest this night bird should change his mind."

Another cause of astonishment awaited Gurges and his men. As they came in sight of the sacred grove of the Muses, they perceived that the base of the dark mass scarcely visible in the gloom of the night, was illuminated by thousands of lights, some stationary and some moving in the direction of that part of the woods consecrated to Libitina.

"What are those Christians about?" exclaimed Gurges, "that they are not asleep, but wandering out at this late hour, with torches . . . Could it be that they really expect me? . . This would be curious! . . . But let us go on, we will soon find out! . . . "

When the party left the Appian way to enter the grove of the Muses, they were again stopped, with the challenge: "Who goes there?" by two Christians, placed as sentries on the outskirts of the woods.

"Gurges!" replied the designator, in a much firmer tone than he had answered the triumvir's challenge.

"You are welcome!" said the voices.

"This is well, what you are doing, Gurges," said one of the Christians, coming forward and grasping the designator's hand . . . "But we should have expected as much from your friendship and devotion . . . Thanks, in the name of our brethren . . . You will find them all in tears!"

"But, what has happened?" inquired Gurges, completely bewildered. "I cannot understand what you say! . . . You can know nothing of the business which brings me here."

"You ask what has happened?" replied the Christian; "we have lost our mother . . . Petronilla, the sainted virgin, fell asleep in the Lord, day before yesterday, and we are watching here to welcome the Christians who will attend her funeral at day-break . . . I thought you had been informed of this great misfortune . . . "

"No," said Gurges, "I had not heard of it . . . Ah! Petronilla, the poor old woman whom I loved so much for the affection she bore Cecilia, is dead," he added, with emotion, returning the pressure of the Christian's hand . . . "This, then, is the reason why the triumvir told me I was expected here . . Let your mind be easy, everything will be done in a suitable manner . . . Only, I should not have been advised so late."

It was the Christian's turn to wonder.

"Are Olinthus and Cecilia here?" asked Gurges.

"They closed Petronilla's eyes . . . But they returned to Rome yesterday, to bring back Flavia Domitilla and our other brethren. We are expecting them . . . "

"And the pontiff Clemens?" inquired Gurges, remembering the mission he had undertaken, "is he not here?"

"Clemens has not left Petronilla . . . He is praying for her, at this moment before the altars of the Lord."

"Very well," said Gurges. "I shall go and see how matters stand, and give my orders without delay."

Gurges and his vespillos penetrated into the grove. The worthy designator had never done so much thinking as on this eventful night.

"Let us see," he reasoned, as he walked on, "these Christians are poor . . . This is evidently why they did not send for me . . . I understand this . . . But Gurges loves his friends, and the occasion presenting he will prove it . . . I liked Petronilla; I shall take charge of her funeral, and I want people to speak of it! . . . Let us organize the ceremony . . . First, I walk at the head of the cortege with my lictors dressed in black, this is understood . . . Next come the images of the ancestors . . . Did Petronilla have any? . . . Ah! yes, one Peter, a very celebrated man, I have heard! . . . Besides, I have in my store rooms any quantity of images of ancestors for families . . . Very well! . . . We shall want twenty mourners . . . I shall see to this! . . I sall say a word to the *præfica* (*) . . . and they will utter lamentable cries! . . . There will be no lack of relations . . I imagine all those Christians will follow Petronilla . . . The funeral bed, the pyre? That's my lookout . . . Ah! the funeral discourse? . . . It is rather late to get somebody to prepare it . . . But I shall ask the Pontiff Clemens for a delay of twenty-four hours to organize my ceremony! He cannot object to this . . . "

The meditations of the designator were interrupted by the sound of pure voices ascending to heaven in pious concert. Looking up, he stopped in a respectful attitude. The corpse was before him.

Petronilla, the octogenary virgin was placed in a reclining position, on a bed of leaves. Her eyes turned to heaven. She was clad in white garments, studded with flowers—emblems of the purity of her life; a wreath of white roses encircled her brow. One would have scarcely realized that she was dead, such was the serenity of her features, which retained an august expression very different from the rigidity of death. Around her burned torches of rosin, emitting an

*The woman who acted as chief mourner at funerals.

aromatic odor, and perfumes that filled the atmosphere with their fragrant emanations.

On each side of the funeral bed was a choir of women and young girls who watched, and sung alternately sacred hymns or passages from the holy canticles. These were the voices Gurges had heard.

The women sang:

"Blessed be the Lord! She died in His grace; the betrothed came; she held her lighted lamp in her hand."

The young girls replied:

"She has flown to Heaven like the dove of the desert; her soul is as white as the lily in the vale; no impure breath has tarnished her virginal body."

And all repeated together, three times:

"Glory be to God! Glory be to God! Glory be to God!"

The designator looked at these arrangements with a critic's eye, and communicated, in an undertone, to his vespillos his condemnation of such things as did not appear to him in harmony with the established usages.

"Where are the embalmers," he whispered, "to wash and perfume the body of this respectable matron? Where are the fasces which should surround that bed? By-the-by, it should have been decorated with better taste. I don't see the black hangings . . . Nor the cypress trees, clipped into a mournful shape, nor the flute-players who should accompany these funeral songs. If I had been advised of this, nothing would be wanting in the marks of respect due this old Petronilla . . . "

A hand laid on the designator's shoulder interrupted the expression of his regrets.

"Ah!" said he, turning round, "Olinthus and Cecilia! . . . Why," he added reproachfully, "did you not inform me of this sad event?"

"Dear friend," said Olinthus, "since two days we have not left our mother one moment. She passed away in our arms . . . "

"Olinthus," exclaimed Gurges, "I must take charge of the funeral . . . I only ask for a few hours delay in order to prepare it with becoming solemnity!"

"Thanks, Gurges, but this cannot be . . . "

"And why not, my dear Olinthus? . . . Should a friend's services be refused?"

"No, Gurges, but Libitina, the goddess of funerals cannot preside over the obsequies of a Christian virgin," replied the centurion, with a smile.

The designator looked shocked.

"You, Christians, are very exclusive!" he remarked, discontentedly.

"Gurges! Gurges!" said Olinthus, in a tone of friendly reproach, and pressing the worthy designator's hand. "Do not feel vexed . . . Here comes the pontiff Clemens," he added, pointing at a cortege in the distance, "he will tell you, better than I could, the reasons of our refusal."

The dawn lighted faintly the sacred grove. The first rays of the rising sun tinged with gold the cloudlets on the horizon. The damp mist of night melted, driven by the morning breeze. The loud chirp of the insects mingled with the voices of the birds celebrating with joyful songs the return of light.

Amidst this concert of awakening nature, grave and pious voices intonated the sacred canticles; a long file of men and women bearing green palms, approached slowly, and surrounded the bed upon which rested Petronilla. Each one, as he or she passed the foot of the bed, made the sign of the cross, and sprinkled the body with the holy water used in Christian ceremonies.

Then, in the rear of these men and women, came the Bishop Clemens surrounded by his priests and deacons. The pontiff blessed the crowd who bent their heads reverently. Having arrived near the corpse, he sprinkled it three times.

The time had come for the funeral.

Olinthus and Cecilia joined the cortege; they were followed by Flavia Domitilla, and by Flavius Clemens and his two sons, who had hastened to pay the last honors to the daughter of the chief of the Apostles. They had been detained in Rome by important cares. During the night, Domitian's summons to attend on the next day the examination of the sons of David, had been delivered to them.

Gurges and his vespillos mingled with the crowd.

"My brethren," said the pontiff, addressing the silent and collected multitude, "Petronilla is no more. Almighty God has recalled her to Him. She is in His Taber-

nacles, repeating the eternal Hosanna, and singing the praise of the Lamb. She awaits us amidst the just with the Apostles of Christ, the first martyrs of the faith, the holy virgins whom the mysterious Spouse glorifies and consoles.

"Let us rejoice, my brethren, for this day is not a day of mourning; let us, also, sing Hosanna, for the Lord has manifested in this humble servant His grace and the most precious gifts of His love!"

"Glory be to God! Glory be to Jesus-Christ! Glory be to His elect!"

The assemblage repeated these three invocations.

"My brethren," continued Clemens, "the days of persecution are near; I feel it in my heart, God has revealed it to me by secret warnings. Let us await with peaceful souls the hour of trial; let us bless the Lord if He wisheth that we should confess His name.

"I have appointed seven notaries to preserve the names of those who shall fall by the sword, in order that the memory of their constancy shall not be lost for the encouragement of the weak and the imitation of future Christians; I have prepared the asylum where the bodies of our martyrs will rest until the day of eternal life.

"We are going to place Petronilla in this first Christian field of rest; it was meet and just that Peter's daughter should be the first to enter that asylum which will extend one day under the city of Rome like an invisible boulevard, and where the bones of our brethren who died for the faith of Christ, will be so numerous, that they will serve to make the cement of its walls, and the stones of its vaults!"

"Glory be to God! To our Lord Jesus-Christ! To His elect!"

The assemblage again repeated the joyful words.

"And now, Christians," continued the pontiff, "having celebrated the holy mysteries, let us lay Petronilla in the grave whence her body will arise, impassible and glorious, at the consummation of ages, We shall not, as the Gentiles do, throw to the winds her ashes gathered from a funeral pile; she will remain among us as a pious memento, as a sacred relic—humble and gentle example during her life, glorious exhortation after her death!"

"Amen!" responded the multitude.

The pontiff then took a palm from the hands of one of the faithful, and having dipped it into a vase containing water, sprinkled a few drops upon the venerable virgin asleep in the Lord; after this he turned around and sprinkled the assemblage.

The sacred dew fell on Gurges as well as on the other assistants.

"That's the lustral water," whispered the designator to his vespillos. "It is the way to throw it on the relatives and friends of the deceased, but this should be done at the end, not the beginning of the ceremony. Another mistake! Why did they not let me do it?"

The bed of leaves was lifted by twelve young maidens dressed in white and crowned with white flowers. Near them walked other young girls, also clad in white, and singing sacred songs. Next came the women carrying pine torches, and lastly the men grouped around the pontiff and his priests and joining their deep voices to those of the maidens.

A young woman, dressed in the deepest mourning, walked immediately behind the funeral bed, supported by Flavia Domitilla, the Emperor's niece, and Eutychia, the mother of the plebeian centurion. This disconsolate mourner was Cecilia. The young matron was so overwhelmed by her grief that she would have fallen but for the assistance of her two friends.

As for Gurges, he followed the cortege at some distance, still criticising the arrangements, but respectful and with uncovered head.

The funeral procession soon reached the crypt which was to receive Petronilla's body. Some of the men took the place of the young maidens, to lower the body in the grave which was lined with a thick layer of laurel leaves. The sainted octogenarian was placed on this aromatic bed, with her face towards the East; and the young girls kneeling around the grave, threw into it their wreaths and palms.

Cecilia, still sustained by her two companions, approached to deposit also her pious memento. This was the slave's garments she had worn on the day of her emancipation, and with which she now wrapped the rigid limbs of the loving friend who had received her in her arms on that memorable occasion.

The songs had ceased. The pontiff sprinkled the body once more, and threw upon it a little earth. The women put

out their torches; the men filed past, each throwing a handful of earth upon the body and inclining his head reverently; and soon there was left near the levelled grave but two persons kneeling and weeping together—Olinthus and Cecilia.

When, at last, they arose to go, Olinthus found himself face to face with Gurges. The designator's eyes were wet with tears.

"Take me to the pontiff Clemens, my dear Olinthus," said Gurges, "I must speak to him."

"Come with us," replied the centurion, too much absorbed in his grief to say more.

Gurges followed silently. When they arrived near the pontiff he was inviting Flavius Clemens and the young Cæsars to join the other Christians in the agapæ which followed the funeral ceremonies.

"We cannot," replied Flavius Clemens. "The Emperor has sent for us; and it will soon be time to go to the palace, in obedience to his orders."

"Ah!" thought Gurges, "if this Consul and those young Cæsars had seen the letter I have under my tunic . . . how quick they would turn their backs upon Domitian!"

When Flavius and his sons had taken leave of the pontiff, Olinthus introduced Gurges to the latter, whom he acquainted with the designator's generous offer.

"Thank you, my son," said the priest, with a smile. "But you see we have our rites."

"Which are better than ours," replied quickly Gurges, moved by Clemens' kindness and this name of "son" which the venerable man had applied to him. "But, my lord, I have called to see you upon a grave matter," he added, "will you permit me to speak to you privately?"

Olinthus left them. The designator then hastened to hand Metellus Celer's letter to the pontiff, saying:

"Read, my lord, this writing which has been in the Emperor's hand."

When the pontiff finished reading, Flavius and his sons were still in sight. Clemens saw them ready to step into their litters. He made a motion as if to call them back, but withheld the cry ready to escape from his lips.

"No," he said, thoughtfully, "I must not recall them! . . . It is better that they should obey Domitian . . . If

they showed the least hesitancy . . . if they attempted to justify themselves . . . they would be lost! . . . Let them approach the Emperor, ignorant of this accusation . . . Their surprise and indignation will only have truer and more convincing accents!"

He turned to Gurges.

"You say, my son," he added, "that the Emperor has read this letter? . . . How do you know it? . . . "

The designator narrated briefly what had happened to him.

"You have acted right, my son," said Clemens, "I shall justify your confidence . . . You may rest assured that this letter will be handed to the Grand-Vestal. But be silent concerning these matters.

Gurges promised to obey.

"My son," resumed the pontiff, in a solemn tone, and as if answering a secret thought, "God has given me for mission to help all who are in danger, to save alike the gentile and the Christian, the priestess of false divinities as well as the virgin consecrated to Christ . . . It may happen that I shall come to you, one day, as you have come to me . . . Will you do then what I shall ask you?"

"I swear it!" exclaimed Gurges, with enthusiasm, "at any time, in any place, and for anything, I devote myself to the pontiff of the Christians! . . "

Gurges could not resist when one appealed to his heart.

"Farewell, my son," said Clemens, with an affectionate smile . . . "We shall doubtless meet again . . . For the present my flock require my care."

Gurges bid farewell to the pontiff, and having joined his vespillos, returned with them to Rome.

CHAPTER X.

WEALTHY, BEAUTIFUL, GREAT . . . AND UNHAPPY.

WHILST Domitian is marching against Lucius Antonius, we shall go back to Cicero's house, to find the divine Aurelia, of whom we had lost sight.

It was a few days after Cecilia's emancipation. Aurelia, alone in her cubiculum, was reclining on rich cushions, playing listlessly with some flowers, which she took from a beautiful murrhine vase and picked to pieces. The young girl was sad and pensive. Some bitter sorrow seemed to weigh on her heart. She had sent for her old tutor, and was waiting with impatience for his arrival.

From the time when she had thrown herself, weeping, into the Grand-Vestal's arms, exclaiming: "Vespasian is a Christian! all my hopes of happiness have fled!" this thought had not left her mind, and none could have guessed what despair had filled her heart when, before the pretor's tribunal she had seen Flavius Clemens and his two sons surrounded by the Christians, receiving their homages, and, in return, showering marks of sympathy upon these despised people.

Aurelia abandoned herself to the bitterness of her thoughts in the midst of the solitary life led by the Roman women, and which is little known in our days. Such a thing as the family circle or the pleasures of home was unknown. The adage: *Mulier familiæ suæ et caput et finis est*, had necessarily passed from the laws into the customs, or rather custom had introduced it into the law, and this habit of looking upon woman as a being left to its own resources, commencing and ending in the same person, had destroyed even the meaning of natural family ties.

The words which, in the Roman law or in the ancient writers, expressed the relations established by consanguinity between individuals, designated ties very different from those known in the present time. With a little attention we discover in the writings of the old authors the absolute void of a Roman woman's life, and the forced solitude which surrounded her. We realize all the frivolity and idleness of that existence so forcibly styled *mundus muliebris*. So, we

might give the list of her numerous garments; we might say which she wore in the morning, which at mid-day when visiting the porticoes, and which she reserved for evening wear; we might name the perfumes and cosmetics prepared to enhance the brilliancy of her complexion, the essences in which she bathed, the jewels with which she loaded her fingers, her wrists and ankles. All these things have been minutely described.

We see her plunged in indolence, in the midst of numerous slaves always ready to spare her the least exertion; we follow her in her shopping and visiting excursions in the city, and gaze with astonishment upon the extravagant splendor of her cortege, when she repairs to places of public amusement.

But it is seldom that we see her surrounded by her family; seldom that she is shown to us enjoying the pure happiness of the home circle; she hardly seems to know the sainted affection which unites beings in whose veins the same blood courses.

Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, so proud of her two sons whom she called her most precious jewels, presents a pure picture seldom reproduced in Roman history.

The matron, having a husband and children, felt necessarily some movement around her, but the motherless young girl, the orphan, *sui juris*, was truly alone in the world; she was as lost in the immensity of that city of Rome with its three millions inhabitants. Wherever she turned, she saw a moral wilderness; from the uproar of the thousand noises which filled the city, not a voice spoke to her soul.

It is Christianity which has created the intimacy of modern relations; it is religion which peopled the wilderness of the ancient world; it is through the emancipation of woman restored to her primitive equality with man that the politeness of customs was founded; to religion we owe the charm—unknown to ancient civilization—of the pure and respectful friendship which transformed society. This thought is not new, but it is so true, that it cannot be proclaimed too often.

Woman, raised in her own eyes, returned to the joys of the family, delivered from the cares of loneliness, and now honored and loved, is no longer the implacable and blood-thirsty being, the monster of cruelty revealed to us by the ancient writers. In her house, every one trembled around

her. Neither her husband nor her children were shielded from her fury. As for her slaves, the atrocities perpetrated by the matrons upon those wretched creatures surpassed the most cruel inventions of the masters.

Aurelia was far from resembling these matrons; not only her youth, but the secret tendencies of her heart, the peculiar circumstances which had surrounded her infancy, made her an exception to the common rule. The Grand-Vestal's friendship had developed the child's affectionate nature; and, later, the pressing lessons of Flavia Domitilla, the example of her gentle virtues had implanted in the young maiden's soul the germ of noble thoughts.

When she returned from the Forum, after Cecilia's emancipation, all her relations hastened to thank her for her generosity towards an obscure young girl she had returned to a father's embrace. She heard the touching expression of Cecilia's gratitude, and promised her her friendship. Vespasian, her betrothed, called several times and mingled his loving praises with those of her relations; she conversed with him at length . . . and lost all hope! . . .

"Always in tears! my dear and august ward," said Vibius Crispus, entering the room suddenly.

"Yes, Vibius, always in tears! . . . and they will not soon cease to flow," replied Aurelia, sorrowfully, and she made sign to her guardian to take a seat near her. "They praise me for having been kind to this little Cecilia but how poorly they reward me! . . . "

"Come, my dear ward," Vibius asked affectionately, "what has happened?"

"Strange and incredible things, dear guardian . . . You suspected Flavia Domitilla and my other relations of being Christians . . . But you would not have thought that Vespasian belongs to that sect!"

Vibius Crispus bounded with surprise from his seat, and repeated like a man who has not heard right or does not understand what he has heard:

"Vespasian! . . . Your affianced husband . . . the heir of the empire . . . is a Christian? . . . "

"Yes, guardian, it is not a dream . . . it is not a doubt . . . Vespasian himself told me so, here, sitting near me as you do now . . . Besides, I knew it already . . . Did you

not notice, the other day, that he accompanied the pontiff of the Christians? . . "

And Aurelia, hiding her face in her hands, sobbed bitterly.

Vibius Crispus walked about the room, plunged in deep thought and uttering only incoherent words. He foresaw important events and fearful dangers.

"He must abandon that impious creed," he said, at last.

"He will not abandon it, dear guardian . . . "

"But he can have the empire only at that price!"

"He will renounce the empire . . . he will give me up, if needs be! . . . He told me so! . . . Yes, he said so! . . " exclaimed the young girl, no longer weeping, no longer crushed under the weight of her sorrow, but standing erect, with flashing eyes, and speaking with all the bitterness of wounded pride.

"Here is what took place between Vespasian and me." resumed Aurelia, when she had recovered a little calm. "As I have told you, I had surmised, from certain words of his, that Vespasian shared the ideas of Flavia Domitilla, and if I had not, what happened in the Forum, where all the Christians saluted Flavius Clemens and his two sons as people salute only those who share their affections and sentiments, could have left me no doubt. I returned home anxious, uneasy, not knowing what to hope or fear . . . Yet, as I reflected, I felt more tranquil; I said to myself that I would speak to Vespasian, and ask of him the sacrifice of an unreasonable opinion, dangerous to him, threatening to the high destinies which await us . . . It seemed to me impossible that my cousin should refuse . . . He would, doubtless, renounce with joy all other affections for mine . . . In a word, I still hoped!

"Yesterday, my cousin came here . . . I had seen him several times since that eventful day in the Forum, but I had not been able to converse freely with him . . . He was overjoyed . . . he showed me the most tender affection . . . He pressed my hands in his, saying again that I had been good, generous, and that he thanked me for it . . .

"'Dear Vespasian,' said I to him, seizing this opportunity, 'what I did for this little Cecilia is very simple. What reason have you for being so grateful to me?'

"At this question, Vespasian looked at me with an air of great surprise.

"'Dear Aurelia,' said he without hesitation, 'do you not know with what courage she glorified our God for the salvation of our brethren?'

"'Your God! . . . your brethren! . . . dear Vespasian, what means this language? Have you a God other than mine?'

"'Dear cousin,' replied Vespasian, 'are you not aware that I am a Christian?'

"'So, you confess it, dear Vespasian.' I remarked, with an involuntary shudder. 'You are a Christian! . . . '

"'Yes, my dear Aurelia, I am a Christian. Flavia Domitilla who instructed my father and mother in this holy law, could not overlook their children . . . '

"'Oh! Flavia Domitilla did not forget me either,' said I, ironically . . 'By Jupiter! it is not her fault if I am not a Jewess also . . . '

"'Aurelia, Aurelia,' said Vespasian sadly, 'why defend yourself by invoking Jupiter? . . No, unfortunately, you are not yet a Christian, but you are worthy of becoming one . . . And if I believe the voice of my heart, you will be a Christian . . . '

"'Enough of this, dear Vespasian . . . I do not suppose you have lost your mind . . . Come,' I added, smiling kindly, 'will you grant me what I am going to ask you?'

"'Yes, dear cousin, provided it is not contrary to my religion.'

"'Can you style that strange worship a religion?'

"'It is the only true religion, dear Aurelia . . . '

"'How you say this! cousin . . . But never mind, you must give it up for my sake.'"

Aurelia here interrupted her narrative to address herself to Vibius Crispus who, according to his prudent custom, was listening attentively without expressing any opinion.

"You see, guardian," said she, "that I put the question in the most direct form to my betrothed . . . But I was alarmed at the grave and sad expression assumed by his countenance."

"'What!' he exclaimed, 'is it my dear Aurelia who makes such a request?'

"'Vespasian,' said I tenderly, 'are you not a Cæsar? . . . And am I not your betrothed?' . . .

"'Aurelia,' he replied impetuously, 'do you love me as I love you?'

"'Oh!' I exclaimed, in a tone of reproach, 'can you doubt it, dear Vespasian?'

"'Well! dear cousin, instead of asking me to sacrifice my faith, seek to learn the truth, and trample under your feet that Jupiter of which you spoke just now . . .'

"'Vespasian,' I remarked, much astonished at his words, 'it seems to me we are exchanging our parts . . . It is you, not I, who should change. Come, give me an answer.'

"'Ah! what answer can I give you?'

"'But, dear Vespasian, think of what will happen . . . Flavia Domitilla has caused our loss!'

"'Oh!' said Vespasian, 'I see what it is that disturbs you! . . . You think that I cannot be a Christian and remain a Cæsar . . . But what does it matter! . . .'

"'How what does it matter? . . . In fact you must be one or the other . . .'

"'I shall remain a Christian . . .'

"'Indeed! Vespasian,' I exclaimed in a tone of doubt, 'do you speak seriously? . . .'

"'Quite seriously, and with joy, dear cousin.'

"'And would you feel that joy also, if you knew that your betrothed cannot become your wife?'

"'You are cruel, my dear Aurelia.'

The young girl paused again, to interrogate her guardian's face. Vibius remained impassible. She suppressed a sigh and resumed:

"I had spoken so excitedly that I felt alarmed at the cold resolution which marked Vespasian's answers. But there was so much feeling in the manner in which he accused me of cruelty, and so much tenderness in the glance he gave me, that I felt sure of victory. I approached nearer to him; he took my hands and pressed them, calling me by the most endearing names.

"'Vespasian,' I whispered, 'it is not I who would abandon you . . . believe this, at least.'

"'I know it, dear Aurelia . . . I have never doubted your heart.'

"He said this again with great tenderness, with caressing words," continued the young girl, and tears suffused her eyes.

"'But, Vespasian,' I added timidly, 'they may separate us.'

"'It would be a dreadful sacrifice! . . .'

"'You said a sacrifice!' I cried trembling, 'who then would you sacrifice?'

"'Why this question? dear cousin?'

"'Vespasian, you do not love me! . . . It needs but one word a single word! And you will not speak it!'

"Oh! guardian I wept bitterly, for from that time I saw that all was over. But I did not think that my betrothed would have had the courage to go still further.

"He was there before me . . . gazing sadly at me . . . his eyes filled with tears. . . He scarcely dared to speak, and yet I could see on his face a secret calm, the same air of firm resolve that had caused me so much anxiety."

"'Dear Aurelia,' said he at last, 'if I were asked to give up my life, it would be easier.'

"'Your life! Vespasian . . . I am then nothing to you? . . .'"

"'You are everything to me!' he exclaimed in the same loving accents . . . for he loves me, I cannot doubt! 'But,' he added solemnly, 'I cannot prefer you to my God.'

"Oh! guardian," continued the divine Aurelia, "when I heard these words . . . I do not know what took place in me . . . but this was too much. . . I felt faint and giddy, and I fell. . . I saw Vespasian spring forward and catch me in his arms. . . He called loudly to my women. . . Then, I saw nothing more. . . I heard nothing. . . I was senseless. . When I recovered my senses, I was lying on this couch, surrounded by my slaves. . . I looked around me. . . Vespasian had disappeared! . . ."

The young girl's voice grew faint as she concluded the narrative of this bitter trial; she struggled against the great sorrow that crushed her. Her eye was no longer proud, but veiled by her tears. She looked anxiously at Vibius Crispus who, feeling at last that he must say something, murmured in a low voice:

"Those Christians are all alike. . . Nothing can conquer them. . They trample upon everything. . ."

"Is there no more hope, then, dear guardian?" asked Aurelia in beseeching accents.

Vibius Crispus scarcely knew what to say. The selfish old courtier could find no balm for this wounded young heart. Besides, other thoughts filled his mind. What events would result from these facts which he had suspected, and of which he was now certain? The Emperor must soon become aware of them . . . and then? . . . Vibius was afraid!

"Dear ward, allow me time to reflect," said he in the most caressing and affectionate tone he could assume. "No, all hope is not lost. . . Time will doubtless conquer the young Cæsar. Your love must certainly triumph. . . But I am so much suprised that I don't know what to advise. Besides, nothing can be done at present. We shall see. . . Above all, take care that the Emperor hears nothing of this! . . . My dear ward, you may rely on your old guardian . . . he is entirely devoted to you! . . ."

Vibius Crispus continued for some time to offer such vague consolations to that poor wounded soul. But the emptiness of his words wearied Aurelia, who felt herself abandoned by the awkward and cowardly old egotist, her last resource in her loneliness. She made no effort to detain him when he rose to go.

She listened to the noise of his steps on the marble pavement of the atrium. It grew fainter, then ceased, and silence reigned in the vast mansion.

"Oh! how lonely! how lonely!" exclaimed Aurelia, groaning with anguish. "Who will come to me?"

She closed her eyes and remained thus for some time, rapt in thought. When at last she looked up, a young girl stood near her, contemplating her with tenderness, and afraid to disturb her rest.

Aurelia uttered an almost joyful cry, and sprang into the arms of Cecilia, for it was she who thus appeared to Vespasian's betrothed as merciful divinity.

CHAPTER XI.

AURELIA COMMENTS ON SAINT PAUL.

AURELIA showered caresses on Cecilia. She was happy to see this plebeian girl, this Christian slave who owed her her freedom. What motives were there not for the proud patrician, the betrothed of the Cæsar Vespasian, to forget, and even to hate this daughter of an humble Tax-gatherer, whose name even was unknown to her a few days ago. And yet, it was in her gentlest tone of voice that she greeted her:

"Cecilia, my little Cecilia, is this you! . . . What joy to see you! . . . But how did you get here without being announced?"

Cecilia had not seen her noble benefactress since the memorable scene of the emancipation. She had called to return her thanks, accompanied by her father, her Christian friends, Flavia Domitilla and Aurelia's other relations; but this was the first time the two young girls met alone. Cecilia wished to express her gratitude more freely, and, at the same time, to inform Vespasian's betrothed of her own marriage with Olinthus, which would take place in a few days.

"Madam," said the modest young Christian, confused by this affectionate welcome, "I met your guardian, Vibius Crispus, in the atrium, and he brought me here, saying that you were very sad. . . O my dear and noble mistress, what causes your sorrow?"

"It is true, Cecilia, that I am anxious, wearied, unhappy. But these are things I cannot speak of, and which do not prevent me from loving you. Oh! how well you did to come at this moment! . . ."

Aurelia would have felt embarrassed to repeat to the young girl the complaints she had confided to Vibius Crispus; she would not have her know the wounds inflicted to her pride and her love. She preferred to say nothing of what weighed so heavily on her mind.

"Cecilia," she asked with a smile, "are you content now that you have no longer to fear that dreadful Parmenon? Tell me, what has become of you?"

"Madam," said Cecilia, and her eyes beamed with gratitude, "my life will not be long enough to love you and bless

you as I should. . . My happiness will soon now be complete. Our brethren are preparing my marriage with Olinthus."

"You are going to marry!" exclaimed Aurelia painfully, carried back by this news to her own heart troubles. "Ah! I remember, Olinthus was your betrothed, and there is no obstacle between you! . . . And how will your wedding be? I hope my little Cecilia will become a matron by *confarreation.*"

"Oh! madam," said Cecilia, smiling, "we, Christians, know nothing of those forms. We have our own. . . It is at the foot of the altar, after the oblation of the sacrifice, that we will be united before the pontiff who will bless us."

"Tell me, Cecilia," asked Aurelia with a certain anxiety, "do the Christians about to marry love each other dearly?"

"Doubtless, madam," replied the young girl, astonished at this strange question. "Why should they not love each other? It is their first duty according to our law."

"Ah! your law says this?"

"Why, yes, madam. . . The husband is flesh of his wife, the wife flesh of her husband; the two make but one. . . The husband must love his wife like unto himself, and the wife must have the same affection for her husband. . . This is what is written. . . Moreover, my dear mistress, you can see for yourself," added Cecilia, handing Aurelia some sheets of papyrus, which the young patrician took and read with eager curiosity.

It was St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians on the duties of marriage.

"Madam," continued Cecilia, whilst Aurelia was reading those precepts of Christian union, "I have learned very little, as yet, for it is not very long since I embraced this holy religion. They have put into my hands the books which will teach me what I must be in my new position. He who wrote this epistle was a great apostle. . . Among us, his word is looked upon as the teaching of God."

"Cecilia, what is the meaning of this passage: 'This is why the man will leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife?'"

"This is said to show that the husband and wife must mutually prefer each other to all that they hold dearest in the world."

"And, consequently, that they must never abandon each other," said Aurelia, continuing the interpretation. "It seems to me I do not mistake?"

"No, madam, you say truly. Marriage among the Christians admits of no division in our affection, and it remains thus until ended by death."

"So, you would never consent to leave Olinthus?"

Cecilia paused before she answered this singular question, and gazed wih surprise at Aurelia. The tremulous voice and anxious face of the young patrician left no doubt as to the great interest she felt in this inquiry.

Cecilia reflected that her kind young benefactress had perhaps conceived some project concerning her establishment, and was about to ask her to renounce Olinthus. She replied with great firmness:

"Olinthus and I are only betrothed, madam, and these rules do not as yet apply entirely to us. . . But we have chosen each other. . . I have given him my heart. . . I look upon him already as my husband . . . and for no motive would I sacrifice an affection in which I have placed my happiness."

"You said for *no* motive, did you not, my little Cecilia?" repeated Aurelia, evidently delighted by this answer.

"Yes, madam," replied Cecilia in the same earnest and solemn tone. "Even to save my life I would not renounce Olinthus!"

Aurelia felt like kissing the artless young girl again, for the pleasure this clearly expressed resolve gave her; but she was impatient to come to the question which interested her personally.

"I suppose," she resumed, "that you had to choose between Olinthus and your religion what would you do?"

"Oh! this a different thing," replied Cecilia quickly.

"How! another thing?" cried Aurelia. "Does not your law forbid the husband to abandon his wife, and the wife her husband? . . . Suppose you were already married, would you give up Olinthus?"

"Certainly, madam, if to keep Olinthus I had to renounce God. God is above Olinthus, and our law teaches us to sacrifice everything for him."

"Cecilia, what you say is impossible! . . . You would not do it! . . ."

"I have done it, my dear mistress," said the young girl, with touching simplicity, for if she could not understand the object of all these questions, she saw the opportunity of giving the questioner a great lesson in Christianity.

"You have done it! . . . When? . . ." exclaimed Aurelia, much astonished.

"When I was in Parmenon's hands. With one word I could have obtained my freedom, and, with it, Olinthus. I did not speak that word, for it would have been betraying my God and my brethren! . . ."

"It is true," murmured Aurelia, "yes, it is true! . . . Vespasian would have the same strength! . . . Oh! I must lose all hope! . . ."

Her sobs choked further utterance. Cecilia had shown her the greatness of a Christian soul often struggling with the dearest sentiments and conquering them by the holy austerity of duty. Cecilia, like her, was young, and loved with a pure and fervent affection, and yet she had sacrificed everything, her happiness—dearer than life itself; and Aurelia remembered the bleeding scars left on the poor girl's delicate shoulders by the torturer's lash—touching proofs of her constancy.

Here was a great example for the young patrician; but it overwhelmed her, for she felt now that Vespasian must also prefer his God to her love; she had read in his eyes the sad firmness and calm resolve of a Christian who will not compromise with his faith. The poor child commence to understand the law of duty.

Cecilia had seen the tears of the noble young girl, and she understood at once why they flowed. She clasped in her arms the daughter of the Cæsars, and wept silently with her. It was a touching picture!

"Cecilia! Cecilia," sobbed the young patrician, "this sorrow will kill me!"

"My beloved mistress, can the Cæsar Vespasian perjure himself?"

"So, Vespasian would renounce the empire? . . . Even I would be nothing to him! . . ."

"But why suppose that the Cæsar will have to undergo this trial. . . Does any one threaten him?"

"No, but this may happen sooner or later. It is this which frightens me since I know that he is a Christian . . . and then? . . ."

Cecilia lavished her tender caresses upon the afflicted young girl, but hesitated to answer those pressing questions.

"Tell me," resumed Aurelia, "would Olinthus have such contempt for your love?"

"Madam," replied Cecilia with much feeling, "I would, if it need be, soften the pain of Olinthus' sacrifice, by encouraging him myself. . ."

"Oh!" exclaimed Aurelia, "and you say that you love your betrothed!"

"It is because I love him that I would prefer his happiness to mine!"

"What do you mean? . . . His happiness?"

"Our God, my dear mistress, may sometimes impose upon us painful duties, but He rewards us a hundred-fold for what we suffer in his name! This is what makes our strength."

"My cousin, Flavia Domitilla, told me this already. She even added that the imperial power is nothing. . ."

"Nor life, even, my dear mistress," said Cecilia, interrupting her with affectionate respect.

Aurelia hung down her head, and remained silent. The bright example of Christian fortitude presented by Cecilia, could not fail to make a deep impression upon the young patrician's mind. Aurelia abandoned herself involuntarily to the charm of this grateful affection which gradually opened her heart to resignation and hope.

At that period, moreover, Christianity, like unto the morning flower still wet with the dew of the night, and impregnated with its fragrance, filled the soul with its penetrating perfume; it often happened that from a single word, an example, a thought, sown in that soil already prepared by mysterious aspirations, faith sprang forth, to grow and blossom suddenly under a divine breath.

And who more than the young patrician had felt the genial warmth of this Christian atmosphere with which she was, so to speak, surrounded? Nevertheless, a single day was not sufficient to conquer these vacillations of a rebellious heart, or to temper this great sorrow, breaking forth in loud groans.

The two young girls remained a long while together. When Cecilia took leave of Aurelia, the latter no longer felt the bitter despondency which had followed her guardian's departure. She had now a loving heart to sympathize with and console her.

Cecilia's marriage did not make her renounce the work of love and gratitude she had undertaken. She pursued it with indefatigable devotion, and her gentle words, her modest virtues and great faith, had a blissful influence on the mind and heart of the young pagan whose soul she wished to save.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ATRIUM REGIUM.

IN the eighth region of Rome, at the base of Mount Palatine, between the New-Way, the Viscus-Tuscus and the Forum, was an ancient temple of circular form, and built at the end of a court surrounded by porticoes. Near by was a sacred grove inclosed by high walls.

This temple was erected by Numa Pompilius, who consecrated it to Vesta, the goddess of earth and fire, and who built his house, a small and humble structure, near this sanctuary. At the time we speak of, the deity alone dwelt in it, with the priestesses having charge of its altars. The *Atrium Regium* or *Regia Numæ* was still venerated by the Romans as the inviolate residence of the pious king to whom they owed a worship which survived all other institutions.

Numa had instituted but four vestals; Servius Tullius or Tarquin-the-Elder raised this number to six. During the eleven hundred years this institution lasted, that is, to the time of Theodosius-the-Great, who is said to have abolished it (A. D. 389) this number never varied.

Everything connected with the worship of Vesta was symbolic, from the temple in which the sacred fire was kept continually burning, to the obligations of the priestesses. The shape of the temple was round—image of the earth of which Vesta was the divinity; the priestesses must be virgins, because fire, the principle of heat which animates the world,

is naturally sterile. No image retraced Vesta's features; fire alone represented her in her temple.

With a little attention we find in the traditions of ancient religions the distinction which Christianity has made so great between spirit and matter.

If the material fire burning on Vesta's altars, happened to go out, it was a misfortune so great that Rome feared the most fearful events. The negligent priestess was punished with the rigorous torture of the lash.

But, if the Vestal permitted the flame of purity which should burn in her virgin heart until her youth had flown, to die out, Rome was no longer Rome, but an immense necropolis, plunged into a lifeless consternation, and which revived to hope only when the crime had received its punishment.

And this punishment was not merely the dread penalty of the lash; the guilty priestess was buried alive!

Those two emblems, fire and the earth, cannot grow old. It was proper then that the virgins of Vesta and the sacred fire should remain forever young. For this it was that the fire which lost some of its purity by coming in contact with material fuel, was rekindled each year, on the March Kalends, that is on the day upon which the year formerly commenced, and time renewed its imperishable youth.

For this, also, the priestesses of Vesta upon reaching their thirty-sixth or fortieth year—extreme limit of their sacrifice, were made to turn over their ministry to younger successors, in whose hands the divine flame, image of Vesta's inalterable chastity would burn more brightly.

Let us penetrate into the sacred asylum whose thick walls have ever awakened the curiosity of man. Paganism knew nothing of the austere practices which have made the cloister inaccessible.

Women could visit the Vestals at all hours, The men were not excluded, but they must retire before nightfall. The public had access to that part of the temple where the sacred fire was closely watched and fed by a vestal. The inner part of the sanctuary was closed to all except the Grand-Vestal and the pontiffs. There were kept the images of the tutelary Gods of the Romans; and among others a *Palladium*, or statue of Pallas, [illegible]hich was attached the safety of the empire

The costume of the Vestals was the most graceful that could be worn by a young girl. It consisted in a long stole of the finest linen, descending to the feet; and, over this, a short, white tunic, reaching a little below the waist. Their hair was plaited into six braids and tied up with narrow bands; over this was placed the *suffibulum*, a square veil of large dimension, which fell gracefully over the neck and shoulders. A few more bands in her hair, and a wider belt of purple than that worn by her companions, were the only distinctive marks of the Grand-Vestal.

Nothing had been neglected to make of the *Atrium Regium* a delightful retreat, a quiet asylum where the soul might recollect itself in silence and repose. Every luxury was lavished here, so that the Vestals would have nothing to regret of worldly pleasures. The worship claimed at their pure hands by the goddess, has no exacting duties; provided the fire burns always brightly on her altar, Vesta smiles, and demands no other homage.

What care could trouble the serene life of these spoilt children of the State, whose every desire was gratified as soon as conceived? The State made the most liberal provision for the enormous expense of their household; it paid for the numerous eunuchs, the attentive slaves that filled the *Atrium Regium*; the soft litters at which the wealthiest Roman girls cast envious looks; the magnificent cars which caused secret spite to the aristocratic matrons, as they rolled past them. In addition to these privileges of the most respected institution, each Vestal received a considerable income. How happy this life then, in which were to be found combined all the pleasures of wealth and rank—all that could flatter the vanity of young girls!

And yet, when a Vestal died, or resigned her office after the legal term; when Vesta claimed another virgin to fill the vacant place in her sanctuary; why was it that consternation reigned in Rome, and every family was alarmed at the mere thought of a daughter being conducted to the *Atrium Regium* to enjoy the life of ease and comfort we have attempted to describe?

Here is the reason of this universal horror:

In the sixth region of Rome (*Alta Semita,*) was a field, the mere name of which inspired terror. It was called *Cam-*

pus Sceleratus; which may be rendered by "The Field of Crime." No human habitation was to be found near this cursed spot; no footstep ever disturbed its awful silence and eternal solitude. It seemed as if nature itself shared in this gloom. The humblest grass could not grow on this soil which seemed condemned to a fearful barrenness. The dew fell not upon the least green tuft; all was dark, naked, desolate.

This sinister spot formed a slight eminence close by the walls of Rome, beyond the *Agger Servius*, from which it could be plainly seen. Neither the magnificence of the *Atrium Regium*, nor the honors paid to their rank could make the Vestals lose sight of this fatal spot hid in the shadow of the monuments of the queen of the world. Their mournful gaze ever sought the unhallowed mound where so many of their companions had found the most horrible and cruel death.

In this field, the priestesses convicted of incest, that is to say, of having sinned against the immaculate purity imposed upon them from childhood, suffered the extreme penalty for their crime.

From time immemorial there existed in the centre of the *Campus Sceleratus*, a deep subterranean vault, whose thick walls smothered the last groans of the victims entombed alive in it. The opening of the shaft through which one descended by means of a ladder, was closed with a wide slab cemented in masonry and covered with earth, so that the eye could not detect its existence.

When a new victim was designated, this slab was dug up; the executioner descended into the pit, cleaned the vault of the ghastly relics of the last sufferer, and made it ready to receive another inmate. A small bed was erected in an angle of the vault; near it were placed a lighted lamp, and small quantities of bread, water and milk—provisions for one day, which a derisive pity granted to the wretch about to descend alive in the tomb.

It is true that the instances of this fearful punishment were rare; but what young girl would select a life whose joys might end in so terrible a death? The virgins of the *Atrium Regium* had good cause to tremble when the vaguest facts, the least founded suspicions often sufficed to determine the inflexible severity of the pontiffs whose office it was to punish this crime? The denunciations of a slave or the confession

obtained by torture were a sufficient basis for accusations that might lead a Vestal to death, unless heaven interposed in her favor, by some miracle. The ancient authors relate several instances of this heavenly intervention. The Vestal Æmilia, who had permitted the fire confided to her care to burn out, and was suspected of a greater crime, tore her linen stole and threw the light fabric on the altar, calling upon Vesta, whom she had served during thirty years, to manifest her innocence. A light flame suddenly consumed the fragment of cloth and ascended to heaven. (1)

Tuccia demonstrated her innocence by carrying water in a sieve, from the river to the Forum. (2) In times still more remote, Claudia tied her belt to the prow of a ship bearing the statue of the Mother of the gods which had made vain attempts to cross the bar of the Tiber, and pulled the vessel safely into port. (3)

Paintings representing these miraculous events were placed in Vesta's temple, and the people believed that the goddess would not fail to show her power again to save a falsely accused virgin; but the young Vestals were not so confiding, and the thought of the fearful vault was enough to poison their joys.

At the time we write of, the virgins who inhabited the Atrium Regium were in prey to the gloomiest forebodings. During the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, they had enjoyed much liberty, and might have believed themselves freed from their terrible obligations. But Domitian had soon taught them that the yoke of the ancient religion still bore upon them; and the death of the two sisters Ocellates and Varonilla, who had recently been compelled to stab themselves, had filled their souls with terror.

They understood, moreover, that the implacable severity of the pontiffs threatened them anew, and the suspicions raised against the Grand-Vestal led them to think, involuntarily, of the dreadful and solemn expiation of the *Campus Sceleratus.*

Then, can any condition of life be happy, which has not been freely chosen? To appreciate the sorrow which inevi-

(1) Denys of Hal. II., 68: Val. Max., 1, 7.
(2) Denys of Hal. ibid. 69; Val Max. VIII., 1, 5; Pliny, Nat. Hist., XXVIII. 2.
(3) Titus Livius; Ovid, Fast. Lib. IV., v 319 to 320, and 343 to 344; Pliny, Nat. His. VII., 35. Suet. in Tiberio, cap 2; Valer. Max. VIII., 4.

tably seized the Vestals after a few years passed in the temple, we must study its action on one who had long suffered its pangs. We shall therefore seek the Grand-Vestal, whom we find conversing with a young woman to whom she is making the picture of her desolate life, and in whose affection and sympathy she seeks comfort.

This young woman, the reader has already surmised, was Cecilia; she was ever to be found associating herself to the sufferings of those from whom she received help; she hastened wherever there were tears to dry and sorrows to alleviate.

CHAPTER XIII.

CORNELIA'S ANXIETIES.

CORNELIA, at thirty-five years of age, was still remarkable for her imposing beauty. The secret anguish that embittered her life had not altered the original splendor of her features or the graceful distinction of her figure. The only mark left by time or suffering was a pallor of complexion which detracted nothing from her beauty. Her large eyes, in which shone her patrician pride, assumed at times a gentle expression which contrasted strangely with her austere physiognomy.

Ordinarily reserved, cold and sad, she could become cheerful and sympathetic when a word or a deed awakened the gentle and charming virtues which slumbered in her soul.

The Grand-Vestal belonged to the greatest family of republican or imperial Rome; to the Cornelian family, whose numerous branches had been illustrated, at all periods, by the highest dignities and most celebrated names of Roman history. The splendor of this race threw in the shade the recent greatness of the imperial house founded by Vespasian and Titus. Cornelia's father was Cossus Cornelius Lentullus, who was Nero's colleague in the latter's fourth consulate, (A. D. 60;) Cornelius Cossus, who was consul with Asinius Agrippa in A. D. 25, was her uncle.

These details will not be unnecessary to explain the Grand-Vestal's position towards Metellus Celer, and their tender

and mutual attachment. Gratitude for a great service rendered had established between them a friendly intercourse from which had gradually grown a more passionate sentiment. The Grand-Vestal had been led to love with all the warmth of a virgin heart, the man she had saved from death, and whose gratitude expressed itself with glowing eloquence. She was sustained by a secret hope: the time was approaching when, relieved of her vows, she might think of a marriage which would secure her happiness.

But, had she inspired Metellus with the same tender passion? would his devotion overcome the religious prejudices which looked upon the vestals as preserving their sacred character even after they had been legally relieved of all their obligations? Such was the mystery which Cornelia had not yet been able to penetrate, for Metellus Celer, while he surrounded her with visible marks of affection, had never betrayed, by a single word, the secret of his heart.

This word, so anxiously expected, had been written by Metellus in the dangerous letter intercepted by Marcus Regulus, and by him handed to the Emperor; but the Grand-Vestal knew nothing of the existence of this letter which, as we have seen, had singularly found its way to the hands of the Christian pontiff.

We must explain here how Cecilia had become the means of communication between the two lovers. During her stay in Aurelia's house, the Grand-Vestal had conceived for the young Christian's courage an admiration which soon changed into a sincere affection; and when she returned to the *Atrium Regium*, she insisted upon Cecilia's visiting her often. The latter consented willingly, but waited until her marriage with Olinthus should be celebrated before calling on the priestess of Vesta. When she entered the *Atrium Regium* for the first time she brought with her a great joy.

The day before a messenger had brought her a letter from Metellus Celer for Cornelia. The latter had not heard from the young man since his departure from Rome; she did not even know where he was concealed. His letter contained all these details, so full of interest for the Grand-Vestal, and announced that he would write frequently to charm the cares of his solitary life.

Cecilia saw in this correspondence nothing more than the language of a grateful heart. Had she thought otherwise,

she would have, doubtless, refused to take charge of letters which awakened hopes condemned by the pious austerity of Christian morals, and which were fraught with danger when entertained by a priestess of Vesta.

Albeit, the Grand-Vestal found a singular pleasure in Cecilia's conversation. Several motives revived continually the interest and sympathy by which she felt drawn towards the humble young matron who had given such an example of generosity and greatness of soul.

Cornelia preserved a vivid remembrance of the compassion shown her by the pontiff Clemens, when he had met her at Aurelia's house, still crushed under the shameful punishment inflicted by Helvius Agrippa, for having allowed the sacred fire to burn out. The words of the pontiff of the Christians had made a deep impression on her mind; and she could not forget the look of pity which accompanied the priest's condolence for the victim condemned by a barbarous creed to an immolation imposed by force and perpetuated by terror.

The Grand-Vestal felt a longing desire to know better the religion she had often heard assailed, but which had appeared so beautiful to her as described by the eloquent voice of the chief of the Christians.

Chastity was also one of the virtues of this new creed; Clemens had celebrated it in two magnificent epistles which the Grand-Vestal, urged by a singular curiosity, had wanted to read. She had learned from them that a large number of Christian young girls held it a glory to remain the spotless brides of the divine Lamb; but she had not understood the figurative sense of these expressions; from the want of proper interpretation, what she had read and heard had left in her mind a confusion which she eagerly wished to have unravelled.

Who better than Cecilia could dissipate this darkness, substitute calmness to this trouble, and satisfy this ardent curiosity? A few conversations with this young woman filled Cornelia with astonishment and revealed to her a new field of thought. On one occasion she had questioned her on Christian celibacy, and asked her if there was any similarity between the Vestals and those young girls who, for Christ's sake, condemned themselves to the same duties.

"Christ," replied Cecilia, "does not demand that we should

select Him for our only spouse; but when we have made this sacrifice, He requires that it should be complete."

"In what manner?" asked the Grand-Vestal.

"It does not suffice that the chastity of the body should be preserved; but the soul must keep inviolate the plighted faith, and its purity must not be soiled even by a sinful desire."

Cornelia remained silent, weighing mentally these simple words in which she found the condemnation of her secret sentiments.

"I can understand," she remarked at last, "that a sacrifice freely consented should be made without reservation; it becomes easy when one is not compelled to make it."

"God sustains and strengthens the courage of his servants; He fills the heart with immense joy."

"The Vestals know nothing of these consolations of the soul," said the priestess bitterly. "Nothing has been left them but sadness and regret. How can they help cursing their obligations?"

"There is doubtless this great difference between you and our virgins," resumed Cecilia, "that they bear with joy the yoke they have voluntarily accepted, and you submit to a necessity which provokes your legitimate complaints. However," she added, smiling, "the Vestals otherwise resemble much our young girls, and it would not be difficult to show that their duties are the same and they can find consolation in their fulfilment."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Grand-Vestal, with some irony, "I am curious to see how you will prove to me that I am happy?"

"Madam," said Cecilia, "one of the great precepts of our religion is that we must confide in God's will and submit to His designs. He alone disposes of blessings and trials, and we must accept what it pleases Him to send us. The most perfect among us ask as a favor, to receive sufferings and sorrows rather than joys and happiness; the others must resign themselves up to affliction if Providence so wills it, and this resignation soon becomes an immense consolation. You see that abnegation may transform our unhappiest condition."

"This is all very well, my dear child," said the Grand-Vestal pensively, "but I am not a Christian, and I have not the resource of your virtues."

"No, madam, it is true that you are not a Christian, but if virtue is good and may make you happier, why not try it?"

The Grand-Vestal smiled at the amiable young woman's frankness.

"My dear child," she resumed, "you have told me that compulsion is not admitted among you. Has not one the right to try to escape from the constraint imposed against one's will? . . . Is not thought free in one who obeys a compulsory power? . . . What is your opinion?"

Cecilia understood easily the allusion to the Grand-Vestal's own situation. She suspected the secret sentiments which had dictated this question whose importance was betrayed by the anxiety depicted on the questioner's features.

"Madam," replied the young woman seriously, "duty, whatever be the conditions upon which we assume its fulfilment, is duty still . . . Voluntary or not, our law forbids its violation."

Cornelia, startled at these words. She remained silent a few moments, collecting her thoughts, and when at last, she spoke, her face was bathed with tears.

"Cecilia," she exclaimed. "You do not know all I have suffered and still suffer. Your religion cannot condemn complaint . . . Listen to my story. It is only when you will have learned how I was made a Vestal, that you can comprehend my misfortune, and know the bitter anguish that fills my soul and which I have tried, so far, to conceal from you."

These last words of the Grand-Vestal need some explanation.

Metellus Celer's letters, frequent at first, had suddenly stopped, and the Vestal was at a loss to explain this silence. She questioned Cecilia who knew nothing more than that the mysterious messenger had ceased coming. We know the reason of this, but Cornelia could not be aware that this interruption was due to the discovery of the conspiracy, and much less that the letter conveying to her the anxiously wished for assurance of Metellus Celer's love had been placed under the Emperor's eyes, and was now in the hands of the pontiff of the Christians.

If the Grand-Vestal, unable to control her growing anxiety, longed to confide her torments to some faithful and discreet

heart, Cecilia had no greater desire than to possess the confidence and friendship of the priestess whom she hoped to convert to Christianity. She had not concealed this hope, and Cornelia had replied:

"I do not believe it possible to go from the *Atrium-Regium* to the Capena-gate."

"Madam," Cecilia replied: "You are so near it by your chastity that but a step remains to be made."

Another motive, besides the laudable one already mentioned, attracted Cecilia towards the Grand-Vestal. She felt the liveliest curiosity to learn something of the private life of the Vestals whose only apparent duty was to feed the sacred fire. It was therefore with undisguised satisfaction that she prepared to listen to Cornelia's story.

"You are going to hear some strange things," said the latter. "But you will know the full extent of a Vestal's misfortune, and you will tell me whether I am not right when I revolt against a yoke whose weight you cannot even suspect."

CHAPTER XIV.

HISTORY OF A VESTAL.

THE Grand-Vestal commenced as follows: "I was born amidst all the advantages of rank and wealth. My family was looked upon as the first in Rome, for what other race can boast of such illustrious men as the Scipios, the Scillas, the Lentuli, the Cinnas and others which I count among my ancestors! Oh! why was I not, like you, my dear Cecilia, the daughter of a freedman! This humble origin would have saved me from the dreadful fate which has made my life one of sorrow and will end—I have that fearful presentiment—only when I descend into the living tomb of the *Campus Sceleratus!*"

"Madam," remarked Cecilia, interrupting her, "it is only the virgins who have broken their vows who are committed to that horrible doom. It cannot, therefore, threaten you."

A slight blush spread over the pale face of the Grand-Vestal; she overcame her emotion, however, and resumed her narrative.

"I shall pass rapidly," she said, "over the first joys of my infancy; happy and too short period, alas! which I remember incessantly after thirty years of sufferings, regrets and tears! Methinks I see the fatal day which ended the happy dreams of my childhood. My mother had taken me, for the first time, in her soft and rich litter to the magnificent porticoes of Rome. We had received the flattering homage of the crowd; my pride was moved by the exclamations of praise I heard around us; young as I was, I commenced to understand the privileges of rank and wealth. This popular demonstration filled me with delight.

"When we returned home, we found my father sitting in the middle of the Atrium, and plunged in the deepest sadness. Upon seeing me, he started, and bitter tears descended slowly down his pallid cheeks. I rushed into his arms, as was my wont, and while he held me passionately clasped, as though I were threatened by some pressing danger, I heard him say to my mother in a voice choked by emotion:

"'Lælia is dead!'

"'Dead!' exclaimed my mother, as faintly, and her face, but now so joyous, became as dreadfully pale as my father's.

"'She died last night,' continued Cornelius in the same tone. 'I heard it at the Forum . . . Here is an empty place in the *Atrium-Regium* . . . Who will fill it?'

"I felt my father's arms clasping me tighter to his heart, and I saw my mother kneel silently and mingle her tears with those of Cornelius and mine, for I wept to see them weep. The slaves who had accompanied us seemed to share the sorrow of their master, and many sobbed aloud. I could hear also, proceeding from another part of the Atrium, the shrieks of despair of my poor nurse, as she lay an inert mass on the marble pavement.

"Then, my mother tried to recall her courage, and asked:

"'Cornelius, are we indeed threatened with this dreadful misfortune?'

"'The pitiless goddess asks for another virgin to replace the one she has lost,' replied my father, 'and what other will be more agreeable to her than this child? All my friends share the forebodings which besiege my heart, and they have not concealed this from me . . . Fabia, our daughter will be taken away from us! Believe me, we shall lose her soon!'

"'Cornelius, the gods will make your forebodings false. No later than yesterday, I consulted the augurs on our daughter's future . . . they replied that they saw nothing but happiness in store for her, for a long time to come.'

"'Fabia,' said my father, gazing at her with emotion, 'the augurs always flatter our desires . . . Dear wife, if you fear nothing, why is it that you weep?'

"The groan which escaped from my mother's heaving chest, proved but too well that she was vainly endeavoring to disguise to herself the grave causes of anxiety which tormented her as cruelly as they did Cornelius.

"My father then related what he had heard in the Forum, where the necessity of selecting another vestal had been eagerly discussed by the patricians. They had reckoned the number of young girls that presented the required conditions for this choice, and my father saw with terror that it would be difficult to complete the legal number—twenty girls, from six to ten years old—which should be presented to the pontiffs. There were many causes of exemption, which pro-

tected this or that family: some could claim the privilege of the three children (*jus trium liberorum;*) here the father was a flamine, an augur, a quindecemvir, an epulo or a salienus; there the child had lost one of its parents, and the law designated only such as had their father and mother living Finally it became evident that while a large number of families were shielded by these and like causes, mine was among the very few threatened. I must be one of the twenty from among which chance (skilfully guided) would designate the victim.

"'Fabia,' exclaimed my father, sorrowfully, when he had finished these details, 'a simple flutist at the sacrifices would save his daughter! This obscure title has never been denied! . . . But I, a consular, shall see my child torn from me! . . . What Vesta, the implacable goddess, wants for her temple is illustrious and beautiful virgins! Am I not the first patrician of Rome, and is not Cornelia the most graceful among the children of her age?'

"A few days after this, a herald brought an order from the pontiffs to my parents, to conduct me to their presence on the next day, when the solemn ceremony would take place which filled the hearts of Roman mothers with fear and hope. My parents obliged to be present at the election which was to decide of my whole life, accompanied me to the place where the Emperor, in his capacity of High-Pontiff, would seize upon the virgin claimed by Vesta. They went without any escort; that could have increased the peril by calling to mind our rank and fortune. For, since the time of Augustus, the priestesses of the *Atrium-Regium* have always been chosen among the noblest patricians. High birth, far from being a cause of exemption, was but another title to the sacrifice imposed by a religion which counts ambition and pride among its greatest virtues.

"When we penetrated into the *Area* through the compact ranks of the tumultuous assemblage, the young girls designated by the pontiff had already been presented. They were nineteen in number and I was the twentieth.

"A herald conducted me to a place in their midst. It seemed to me that this first separation from my family was a cause of joy for the parents of the other children, whose anxious faces brightened up as if I were a victim selected in ad-

vance by an inexorable fate. Strange to relate! I heard the people around me affirm their belief that chance would designate Cornelia.

"Suddenly, the serried ranks of the multitude opened to make way for a cortege which was advancing silently towards the *Area*. It was the Emperor Nero, in his costume of High-Priest and escorted by the sacerdotal college. Every voice was hushed and the awe-stricken crowd waited in breathless anxiety the result of the solemn ceremony.

"An augur approached the Emperor, and informed him that he had consulted the auspices and no bad omens had been observed. The herald then proclaimed the names of the young girls presented. When mine was called I heard behind me the smothered sobs of my parents.

"The names had been written on small tablets and deposited in an urn. The Emperor plunged his hand in the vessel and read aloud from the tablet which he drew forth the name of Cornelia—my name, whispered in advance by so many lips!

"The acclamations of the people drowned the heart-rending cries of my mother, and the imprecations which my father in his despair addressed to the gods!

"The Emperor came up to where I stood, and putting his hand on me, as it is done when one takes possession of a slave, pronounced the consecrated words:

"'Amata,'* said he in a solemn voice, 'I take thee? . .'

"The enthusiastic clamors of the people and the pontiffs became so loud as to interrupt the Emperor; when, at last, they had subsided, he resumed:

"'Amata,' said he, 'I take thee to be a priestess of Vesta and to perform the sacred rites; to do, according to the rights of the Vestals, all that is for the interest of the Roman people and of the Quirites. May a favorable law consecrate this election!'

"So, I was a Vestal! My father and mother were now nothing to me, for a Vestal has no family! I must lose forever all I had known and loved! A child scarcely six years old, I could not comprehend the fatal consequences of the pompous ceremony, and yet, I wept bitterly, for I saw my

* Amata was the name of the first Vestal taken in this manner, and in imitation of the ancient religious traditions, it was preserved in the formula snbsequently adopted.

young companions throw themselves in their mothers's arms, whilst mine called me in vain! . . . I was in the hands of the pontiffs who dragged me towards a closed litter, into which they made me enter despite my cries and supplications!

"A few moments later, I was in the *Atrium-Regium;* my curls fell under the scissors of the priests, and I was dressed in the garb of a Vestal. It is now near thirty years since I entered this asylum of despair which, by a bitter irony, they have sought to transform into a voluptuous and charming retreat; as if a sumptuous life and material enjoyments could prevent regrets, replace the joys of the family, and console us for the void in our affections!

"I never saw again my parents. They died broken-hearted during the first year of my ministry. The better to consummate a separation destined to be eternal, the pontiffs had not permitted us to meet a single instant!

"The impressions of our childhood are so transient, that the life of the *Atrium-Regium* pleased me at first. How could it be otherwise? However wealthy my family, I had never been accustomed to such splendor as now surrounded me. Then, could I remain insensible to the public homage, the enthusiastic acclamations which greet us wherever we go? The young girls who live here are all of illustrious birth, and their intercourse is of the most charming. I became intimate with the youngest, between whose age and mine there was less disparity, and I loved them with all the ardor of a heart who knows no other affections!

"Friends of my childhood, you are no more! . . It is long since death parted us! . . . What a void you have left here! What cruel memories torture my heart when I look back to the fatal day which robbed me of the dear beings whose existence, completely blended with mine, gave me the most precious joys I have ever tasted! . . "

The Grand-Vestal's voice had become tremulous, and her tears flew faster. She resumed, after a short pause:

"It was a horrible day which saw the death of Varonilla and the two sisters Ocellates! . . . From that time I looked upon life with fear, and the future appeared to me gloomy and desolate. It is ten years since that event happened, my dear Cecilia, for it was in the beginning of Domitian's reign, and each of my days, during that period has been marked

with so much anguish, that I know not how it is I have not succumbed! . . .

"Until that time I had lived peaceful, if not happy. I felt, it is true, a vague sadness, but I could not have explained its cause. It is said that migratory birds, when held captive, become restless when the season comes for them to seek more genial climes. In like manner I was agitated and troubled during the transition from infancy to womanhood, and when, seized with the vague desire of a different fate, I saw the horizon of my life bounded by the gloomy walls of this narrow precinct.

"However, I swear it by Vesta, my life was so pure and my heart so candid, that I could not understand what I felt. My soul remained in this sort of torpid state until I was twenty-five years old. The Vestals are initiated from the first day, into the practice of Vesta's worship and its mysteries; but, outside of these material duties, they are never told anything of the closer and more fearful obligations of the soul. It is left to time to instruct them; to their hearts to comprehend; to circumstances to enlighten them suddenly!

"This is what happened to me.

"One morning I awoke, frightened by moans and shrieks, and the tumultuous noise made by our slaves as they ran to and fro in the *Atrium-Regium.* I listened and heard a voice exclaim:

"'They are dead! . . . Their bodies are already cold!'

"'Who is dead?' I cried, as the woman who generally attended me entered my room, all in tears.

"'Varonilla and the sisters Ocellates! . . . We have just discovered the fact.'

"'Varonilla and the sisters Ocellates?' I repeated, with stupor. I had left them in all the bloom of health the evening before; I could not understand what I heard.

"'It is impossible!' said I to the woman. 'What! all three dead at the same time? Who can have said this absurdity?'

'I had jumped out of bed, however, and was rushing towards the apartments of those three young Vestals. I scarcely heard the answer made by my slave: 'They have been killed!'

"Oh! my dear Cecilia, what a terrible sight met my eyes as I opened the door of the room where our servants were crowd-

ing around three youthful forms stretched in all the rigidness of death! With a single glance I recognized the pale features of my young companions, of those I loved as sisters! I fell, senseless.

"I was told that I remained several days in a state of stupor, bereft of reason, of the very sentiment of my existence. When I recovered my senses, I was lying in my bed, and seated near me was a pontiff—Helvius Agrippa! I started with fright, and yet I remembered nothing. Agrippa said to me in a grave and severe tone:

"'Cornelia, the death of Varonilla and the sisters Ocellates changes your position here. You are now the Grand-Vestal.'

"My sobs interrupted him. Memory was returning and with it the dreadful sight of the blood-stained remains of my three friends.

"'Great gods!' I cried. 'It was then true! They are no more!'

"'Thus die the virgins who break their vows,' said Agrippa with awful solemity. 'Do not forget it, Cornelia! . . .'

"'What do you mean?' I asked, looking up at the pontiff who in his turn gazed at me with astonishment.

"'It is strange!' he murmured. 'What!' he resumed, after a short pause, 'can it be possible you are not aware that Varonilla and the sisters Ocellates have been convicted of incest, and their corrupters banished? . . . Cornelia! Cornelia! . . . you have been accused of the same crime, and if you do not sleep now in the *Campus Sceleratus*, near those unworthy Vestals, you may thank the clemency of the Emperor . . . whose niece is confided to your care . . . That child has saved your life . . .'

"Having uttered these threatening and mysterious words, Helvius Agrippa left me to study their impenetrable sense.

"'What! my young companions had succumbed under an accusation of incest! . . . What! I had come near perishing under the same charge! Upon what grounds had this abominable denunciation been made? Who had tried us? Why had we not been arraigned and our defence heard?'

"Here is what was related to me:

"Late in the evening, and but a few moments after I had bidden good-night to my young companions, a centurion, accompanied by a pontiff, penetrated into the *Atrium-Regium.*

They went straightway to the room where Varonilla and the two Ocellates were still gaily engaged in conversation.

"'You must die!' said the pontiff, entering abruptly, and addressing those three young virgins, who grew deathly pale and could not restrain a cry of terror.

"'You have broken your vows!' continued the pontiff with implacable composure. 'You must die! such is the order of the Emperor who, as High-Pontiff, has pronounced your sentence! . . .'

"The centurion, drawing his broad, short sword, presented it to the unfortunate victims.

"'They fell on their knees,' said to me the young Vestal, Antonia, from whom I learned these details—being in an adjoining room, she had crept to the door and had been a silent and terrified witness of the horrible scene—'they begged those two men to spare their lives, to let them, at least, justify themselves from this vague charge.'

"'No,' said the pontiff, 'the slaves of your corrupters have been subjected to the torture, and they have confessed the crimes of their masters . . . Even at this moment, the latter are suffering the punishment of flagellation, after which they will be banished from Rome. As for you, the Emperor leaves you free to select the manner of your death. But your sentence is irrevocable.'

"'But this is impossible! . . . We are innocent! . . . We cannot be killed without a hearing!'

"Those unhappy maidens, wild with despair, prostrated themselves at the feet of their torturers who looked on unmoved.

"'Here is the sword,' said the centurion.

"'Or the poison,' added the pontiff, presenting them a phial. 'Choose!'

"And as the victims still begged for mercy:

"'Do you prefer,' he exclaimed, 'the vault in the *Campus Sceleratus*, which the Emperor, in his goodness, permits you to avoid? . . . Take care! if the light of to-morrow's sun finds you alive, the whole Roman people will witness your execution! . . . Listen! . . . Do you hear that noise outside? . . .'

"The three Vestals listened, shuddering. A confused rumor like that of many voices reached their ears.

"'There is a cohort at the gate,' resumed the pontiff, 'of which this centurion is the chief, and which awaits your decision . . . If you do not chose to die now, this escort will take you away, and to-morrow you will descend alive into the abyss where hunger will bring you a lingering death in atonement for your crimes.'

"This terrible threat was too much for our young companions. Their lips parted for a last supplication, but they uttered no sound. The anguish of despair is sometimes so great as to silence even the prayer of the victim.

"Then, all hope being lost, something dreadful took place.

"Varonilla seized the centurion's sword and dealt herself a blow, but her hand was not firm enough and she had neither the courage nor the strength to strike a second time . . . she presented her bosom to the soldier who plunged in it the blade already reeking with the blood of the fainting maiden.

"The two sisters Ocellates clasped in each other's arms, to meet a common death, were writhing in the most horrible convulsions. They had shared between them the pontiff's poison. Their dying agonies were so dreadful to behold, and death so slow coming, that through compassion, or perhaps impatience, the centurion put them to death as he had done Varonilla.

"Their murderous task accomplished, the two men retired, and it was not until the next morning that the slaves of the *Atrium-Regium* discovered the three bodies lying in their gore. They found also Antonia, senseless at the foot of the column from behind which she had witnessed this tragical scene. This poor child succumbed a few months later, to the shock she had received; fearful visions disturbed her sleep, and she was frequently seized with paroxysms of delirium which finally ended in her death.

"Thus perished those young maidens whose virginal chastity was never tarnished by an impure breath. If I did not share their fate, it was, as Helvius Agrippa had told me, only because the divine Aurelia had been placed in my care some time previous.

"She saved my life, but what a life, alas! how can I help trembling when the mere denunciation of a slave, the secret enmity of a pontiff may at any time secure my condemnation. The most doubtful proof is deemed sufficient against a Vestal —we must not be even suspected.

"Oh! what a fearful light those events have shed into my soul! I had never reflected upon our duties and those pretended promises which our lips never pronounced. I understood now how terrible they were, and I saw an inexorable fate pushing us towards the abyss in which the hands of the pontiffs will entomb me some day—for this horrible presentiment has never left me! Unless they should come to me also, in the dead of night, and say to me: Cornelia, you may choose between the sword and the poison!

"May the gods forgive me, my dear child! But what a religion is this which will have us remain pure, under fearful penalties, and in serving which we are compelled to witness the most frightful disorders! You have heard of the mysteries of the Good-Goddess, over which the Grand-Vestal must preside in person? Ah! when the pontiff of the Christians came with the young Cæsar Vespasian, to claim you from the divine Aurelia, he exclaimed before me that the Vestals fled, horrified, from those infamous mysteries! He spoke truly.

"I cannot lift the veil entirely from this hideous picture. Duty forbids me to say many things, and many others I must omit lest they should call the blush of shame to your cheeks."

At this juncture in Cornelia's narrative, a venerable old man, drawing aside the heavy curtain of the door, appeared on the threshold. The two young women had not heard him approach, and they continued their conversation. Some words which reached the stranger's ears, made him start. He stopped and listened.

"You know, my dear Cecilia," Cornelia went on to say, "that the mysteries of the Good-Goddess are celebrated on the Kalends of May, in the night time. Matrons are alone admitted. On the eve of that day, the Grand-Vestal, taking with her the sacred objects from the temple, proceeds to the house of the pretor, or of the consul, who must vacate instantly the premises and not return until the mysteries are over. I do not know if, as alleged by a poet* who in our days has justly denounced the frightful license of those mysteries, they were formerly accompanied with some decency; but to-day, with what forgetfulness of all shame, with what

* Juvenal, vi.—Lines 334 and 335.

ardor of insane debauchery and incredible frenzy these matrons are seized, who congregate under the pretext of honoring the conjugal chastity of Fauna!

"The first time that I was called upon as Grand-Vestal to preside over these mysteries, I suspected nothing wrong. The preparations were made with due decorum, and the matrons even covered with thick veils the family pictures of the consul, Petilius Rufus—in whose house we had assembled—in order to carry out to the letter the precept of the rites which demands the absolute exclusion of men from the assemblage.

"I was not long, however, in discovering my error and the moral corruption of these women. But I must stop here; I cannot even recite for you the verses of the poet I alluded to just now, although his description is far below the scandalous truth.

"It was some years later, that returning from one of these ceremonies, I had occasion to save Metellus Celer. Cecilia, I cannot tell you how dear this young man has become to me! You know him and you have been able to judge whether he is worthy of the affection which alas! fills my heart. Is this affection then a crime? Your religion forbids complaint in suffering and would have one rejoice at sorrow, you said; would it condemn my sentiments? Shall I not be free soon? . . . And then! . . .

"But what do I say? Why these hopes?" exclaimed the Grand-Vestal, rising suddenly in an extraordinary state of excitement. "Metellus Celer is banished! He has fled from the denunciations of Regulus, and yet, I feel it, the fearful anger of the pontiffs still threatens us. What has become of him? What has happened? Why is it that you receive no more letters for me? In the last, he spoke hopefully, . . . he gave me to understand, for the first time, that he loved me; he said he would soon be able to tell me more! . . . This was three months ago . . . and that letter which was so soon to bring me happiness, has not yet come.

"Cecilia! . . . Great misfortunes are preparing . . . the future is gloomy, and threatening! I see Metellus expiring under the blows of their bloody lash, . . and I! . . . horror! . . . I descend alive in that vault of the *Campus Sceleratus* which has never given up its victims! . . . Great

gods! . . . Who will save me? . . . Who will shield me from this horrible fate? . . . "

"I will!" said in a grave and sôlemn voice, the old man who had listened unseen to Cornelia's last remarks, and who now advanced.

The Grand-Vestal and Cecilia could not restrain a cry of surprise. They had recognized in this old man, the pontiff of the Christians!

"You here, my lord!" exclaimed Cornelia, and she looked at Clemens with mingled astonishment and anxiety; "what motive can have led you to this place?"

"Madam," said the old man, "I have taken charge of an important mission near you, and I hold in my hands an answer to some of the questions I have overheard you propound to this young woman . . . But, at the same time, I have to speak to you on serious matters. Can you grant me this interview?"

The Grand-Vestal acquiesced with a gesture of respectful deference, and motioned to the pontiff to take a seat.

"My daughter," said Clemens, turning to Cecilia, "you may retire . . . Your presence here is no longer necessary. It remains with me to continue the work commenced by you, and to reply to the questions asked of you as I came in."

Cecilia kissed the Grand-Vestal's hand, and having made a low obeissance to the venerable old man, left Cornelia and Clemens together.

The Christian priest and the heathen virgin looked at each other in silence; Cornelia with her heart beating with strange anxiety, Clemens with sadness, as he thought of the sufferings of the young woman and the dangers that threatened her.

CHAPTER XV.

CLEMENS FULFILLS THE ENGAGEMENTS OF GURGES.

THE pontiff was the first to break this silence. He said as he handed a letter to Cornelia:

"Madam, this letter from Metellus Celer is not of a recent date. . . It is sometime since I promised to deliver it into your hands; but I had to reflect before fulfilling this mission. It may be attended with serious consequences and I wished to be prepared to avert them."

Cornelia scarcely heard these words. She was absorbed in the perusal of that much wished for letter in which she found, besides the revelation of public events which must have great influence on her future projects, the immense joy of knowing that she was loved.

Knowing but too well what a terrible blow he would deal to her dreams of happiness, Clemens waited in silence for the moment when he could speak without causing too great a shock to the unfortunate Vestal.

Cornelia turned at last her eyes beaming with happiness, on the venerable pontiff, and remarked, with a sweet smile:

"My lord, it would be ridiculous in me to evoke in your presence the gods I serve, to thank you for all the good you have done me by bringing me news that I had long and anxiously expected. But I shall willingly ask the God of the Christians to repay my debt of gratitude."

Clemens bowed without speaking, and the Grand-Vestal resumed:

"So, my lord, Domitian will soon be overthrown by Lucius Antonius, and his grand-nephews will be proclaimed emperors in his place! This event is of immense importance to you and me. To you! for it will be the triumph of your doctrine. To me, for my implacable persecutors and the terrible fears which besiege me must disappear with the tyrant. I repeat it, my lord, you do not . . . you cannot know all the good you have done me!"

The moment had come for Clemens to fulfill the painful task he had assumed.

"Madam," he said sadly, but with exquisite kindness of tone, "an old man may have the right to manifest his regard

for you . . . and nothing—forgive me this secret devotion—nothing that concerns you or that you may have to fear is unknown to me! . . . But have you been told that when Domitian left Rome it was to march with all his forces against Lucius Antonius?"

"Great gods! . . . Can this be true, my lord?"

"It is an event known to everybody in Rome. The whole Senate accompanied the Emperor. I wonder that this news should surprise you."

"I knew, my lord, Domitian's departure for Germany; but there was no one to inform me of Lucius Antonius' projects. It is only now, after what you have told me, that I can understand the importance of that expedition. But the General will doubtless triumph! Domitian is universally hated!"

"Lucius Antonius will be crushed, madam From positive information I have received, I can affirm this. Do not, therefore, entertain vain hopes!"

"But at least," said the Grand-Vestal, growing pale with secret fear, "much time must elapse before the schemes of our enemies can be carried out . . and in one year, at most, I shall, by ceasing to be a Vestal, escape from the denunciations of Regulus, the resentment of the pontiffs the power of the Emperor! . . . My lord, do you condemn the other hopes which this letter gives me, and would you pronounce me guilty for entertaining them?"

Cornelia's eyes were fixed on the pontiff with profound anxiety, for she detected on his venerable features an expression of sadness which he made no attempt to conceal.

"You are thinking of Metellus Celer," replied Clemens slowly, "and you ask whether I approve or condemn your projects? Alas! the events which threaten you make it useless to examine this question. O my God!" he exclaimed, looking up to heaven and extending his hands over the Grand-Vestal's head, "grant that this virgin who knows already your Holy Name, and who, unawares, has honored you by her purity, may have the strength to bear the blow I must deal her."

"What can you mean, my lord!" cried the Grand-Vestal.

"Madam, the letter you have just now read passed through the hands of the Emperor."

"The Emperor has read this letter!" exclaimed the unfortunate Vestal, with a cry of terror.

She had sprung from her seat, and stood before the pontiff, rigid as a statue, her face ashy pale, her burning eyes distended by fear. Then, this death-like rigidity of the muscles gradually gave way; tears moistened her eyes, and uttering a groan of anguish, she fell heavily upon the cushions. She had not fainted, but was in prey to a paroxysm of tears.

The holy pontiff prayed fervently whilst waiting for the unfortunate young woman to recover sufficiently to listen to his words of consolation and perhaps of hope. A long silent pause ensued. The Grand-Vestal seemed to be interrogating her own heart, to discover whether there existed not some grounds for doubt, some uncertainty connected with the fearful revelation which one word from the venerable pontiff had presented in such terrible light. At last, she made an effort to speak:

"My lord," she said slowly, "your word is sacred and your character holy; you would not frighten a wretched woman with vain dangers; but is it not possible that you are mistaken or that you have been deceived?"

"Would to heaven that I were, madam," replied Clemens with heartfelt emotion; "unfortunately, I am certain of what I say."

"You said, my lord," resumed the Grand-Vestal, "that this letter had been in the Emperor's hands; how came it, then, to pass into yours?"

"This, madam, is the only mystery I have not succeeded in unravelling. I know who gave me the letter. It is the designator Gurges, whose name is not unknown to you. He told me that during the night a stranger had brought him this letter, and had stated to him that it had been read by the Emperor. But, how the stranger knew this, and how this important document passed out of Domitian's hands, he could not say. However, I understand that you should look upon these facts as vague and uncertain—this is what you would say. But I went further, and I believe I can assert that Gurges was not deceived. Yes, the Emperor has read this letter—this is the most important fact, and it matters little that we do not know why he has not kept it."

"You are right, my lord." said the Grand-Vestal in a calm and dignified tone, "it matters little! Domitian's

memory never fails him, and he does not require written proofs! . . . And," she added with bitterness, "when you became certain that this letter contained my death-warrant, you hastened to bring it to me. . . Such is, indeed, the mission of Pontiffs!"

The priest, astonished at this remark, gave the Vestal a reproachful look, in which she read so much sincere compassion, that blushes suffused her pale features.

"Madam," said Clemens, "I go to those of my brethren whom the hand of God has chastized, to tell them it is time to confide in His mercy, and to hope in His almighty power. Why then should I have not come to you with the same words of comfort, if Providence threatens you with some great misfortune?"

The Grand-Vestal made no reply; her eyes were fixed abstractedly upon the floor; she seemed indifferent to what she had heard. A transformation had suddenly taken place in her, and Clemens had no longer before him a weak woman crushed by her sorrow, but a proud patrician accepting with heroic calmness an inevitable fate. Cornelia belonged to one of those grand Roman races whose firmness may be shaken in a moment of surprise, but who soon recover their energy, and display the most admirable courage.

"Madam," resumed the pontiff, "has that young woman, who was conversing with you when I came in, never told you that the ministers of Christ hasten near the afflicted only to bring them hope, and sometimes also, only to promise them salvation?"

"Oh!" said the Grand-Vestal, "hope! . . salvation! . . There can be none for me if ever I fall into the hands of our pontiffs! . . ."

"And I, madam, say I will save you!" cried the priest with such solemn assurance that Cornelia started. "How this will be, I cannot say yet; but have confidence, and remember my words . . Yes, even if you should be already entombed in the vault of the *Campus Sceleratus*, I will save you! I will not let that abominable sacrifice be accomplished under my eyes!"

At this sudden mention of the dread abyss upon which her thoughts so frequently dwelt, the poor Vestal shuddered, and terror was depicted on her countenance.

"My lord, my lord," she murmured faintly, "it would be a prodigy! . . . And I must not hope for one! . . Pray to your God that He may inspire my enemies and the Emperor to forget this letter—the proof of an innocent affection in which others may see a crime. . . I have no right to ask or hope more!"

"My God, madam, is the God of miracles. . . He has promised to his servants who would invoke His name, to manifest His power by the greatest wonders. . . He is the God of truth and of life; I shall ask Him to reveal his power for you . . . and He will do it! . . ."

"Am I then one of you, my lord, that this Almighty God should deign to come to me even in the tomb . . . and to take me out of it at your request?"

"Virgin of Vesta!" exclaimed the venerable priest, "for thirty years you have worn the immaculate garment which the brides of Christ also wear. . . You have not indeed, made the sacrifice of the heart which pleases Him above all; but chastity has bloomed in you, and so beautiful is this flower, that our God looks upon it with loving eyes even when it dwelleth in souls that have not known Him! . . . Be comforted, my daughter, and hope in His mercy!"

The Grand-Vestal was deeply moved by these simple words. As she gazed silently at the venerable old man who had spoken them, she remembered the words of another pontiff whom she had seen near her in similar circumstances. What a difference between the pagan priest and the minister of Christ! between Helvius Agrippa and Clemens. Both had spoken of the same threatening perils; but how different their language. What harshness! what pitiless rigor! what cold indifference in the former! What gentleness! what compassion! what devotion in the latter!

The vaguest suspicions had sufficed Helvius Agrippa to pronounce her guilty; the purity of her past life had had no weight with him. Even when knowing the weakness of her heart and her secret feelings, Clemens honored the virgin whose past was irreproachable; and abstained from condemning her for asking of the future some consolation for the sufferings of a life of sadness.

This indulgence was what the Grand-Vestal felt most keenly in the pontiff's reply.

"I return you thanks, my lord," she said simply, but the grateful look she gave Clemens was more eloquent than words.

"Farewell, madam," said he, "my mission is accomplished. . . Should worse days come, you will see me again!"

The venerable old man left the Grand-Vestal to her meditations.

"O my God!" murmured the pontiff, as he wended his way towards the Capena-Gate, and he turned to cast a last look on the *Atrium Regium*, "there is in that asylum, a poor woman to whom I have promised Your help, and who knows not how near may be the hour of danger! . . Let not my promise be vain, O Lord! . . but permit me to glorify Your name by saving this virgin who will wish to know You and to consecrate herself to You!"

Clemens extended his hand to bless invisibly the afflicted Vestal who, at that very moment, was beseeching the God of the Christians to protect her from the fury of her enemies.

A few days after these events the news came that Lucius Antonius had been killed, and the insurrection was crushed. In less than a month, Domitian returned to Rome, with rage in his heart, and preparing to carry out his long delayed schemes of vengeance.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STORM GATHERING.

THE reader will remember that Hirsutus, having been an invisible witness of the conversation in which Marcus Regulus had revealed to the Emperor the existence of the conspiracy headed by Lucius Antonius, had immediately dispatched a courier to the general, inviting him to march at once upon Rome, where a powerful party would support him.

The events of the following day induced Hirsutus to modify considerably his plans. When Domitian announced to the assembled courtiers that he would march immediately against Lucius Antonius, and subsequently informed Regulus that he would defer the execution of his vengeance in order to make it more complete, the hideous dwarf saw that all would be lost if, Lucius Antonius happening to be vanquished, the documents and plans of the conspiracy should fall into Domitian's hands.

Now, Hirsutus foresaw the defeat of Lucius Antonius who had not had time to assemble the forces necessary to the success of his undertaking, and would be taken by surprise. How could he avert the misfortunes which would follow Domitian's probable victory? how check his cruelty if he came back to Rome having in his possession the names of those who had meditated his overthrow?

Here is what Hirsutus imagined to save so many persons who might, at a later day, and by new conspiracies less compromised than the one recently discovered, serve his secret resentment and avenge him upon the master whose ruin he had sworn Between Rome and Germany, a General named Lucius Maximus was stationed at the head of strong legions. Like many others, he was in the plot, and his forces were to strengthen the army of Lucius Antonius when the latter would move upon Rome. Hirsutus informed this Lucius Maximus of Domitian's early departure, and advised him to turn immediately against Antonius in order to preclude all possibility of the Emperor fighting in person against that General, and thereby to prevent Domitian from obtaining possession of documents to which hung the fate of the senate and the life of so many illustrious citizens. The trustworthy

messsenger selected by him communicated moreover with the principal leaders of the conspiracy, and received their private instructions.

It was represented to Lucius Maximus that this was the only feasible plan in the new situation brought about by the revelations of Marcus Regulus; that Domitian disposed of immense resources and would inevitably crush Antonius; that it was therefore advisable to forestall him, to fall suddenly upon the General of the army of Germany, defeat him, take and destroy his papers, and thereby prevent the emperor from wreaking vengeance upon all who had participated in the plot for his overthrow. With nothing but vague suspicions, Domitian would probably not dare to order the murders he already contemplated.

It is true that this would be sacrificing Antonius; but what was the life of one man when so many were in danger; and would not Maximus himself be one of the victims, if Domitian learned the share he was to have taken in the proposed insurrection?

Those whom fortune abandons seldom find friendships strong enough to remain faithful in the hour of adversity. Maximus, frightened by the serious news sent to him from Rome; knowing better than any one else that Antonius was not yet ready either to attack or resist; and fearing for his own safety, resolved at once to abandon his accomplice. He raised precipitately his camp, and marched with his legions against Lucius Antonius. A sudden rise of the Rhine had complicated the embarrassment of this General who, separated from the greater portion of his troops, was reduced to inactivity. Maximus attacked him at once, and gained an easy victory.

Lucius Antonius was killed in this battle. A soldier cut off his head, and preserved this bloody trophy to present it to Domitian. The latter arrived shortly after to reap the fruits of his lieutenant's victory. But his hopes were disappointed. Maximus had hastened to destroy every document concerning the plan of insurrection. Domitian was in a fearful rage when he learned that he could get no clue to the accomplices of Antonius, and that the designs formed against him must remain an impenetrable mystery. He did not punish Maximus, however, for the latter's hasty zeal. But

he committed unheard of atrocities in Germany, where he remained some time trying to discover the lost thread of the conspiracy.

When he returned to Rome his resentment knew no bounds. Then commenced a reign of terror for the capital of the world. Tacitus has described with inimitable energy of language those scenes of horror. Death or banishment were the fate of the wealthiest and most virtuous citizens. The informers attained the greatest favors; the rewards they reaped were as odious as the infamous acts by which they earned them,

Pliny-the-Younger, in his letters, has also described those days of universal desolation. But he mourns, above all, the numerous friends of which he was robbed by death and banishment.

But Domitian's relentless persecutions were not confined to men whose political influence could have given him umbrage. The philosophers had already been driven away, by him, from Rome and Italy; scholars, historians and poets were now comprised in the renewed edicts of expulsion. For some secret motive the Christians were spared, and neither Flavius Clemens nor his two sons were molested at the time. It is only two years later that the Christian persecution commenced in which Flavius Clemens suffered martyrdom.

It may be that the uneasiness caused to the Emperor by the recently suppressed insurrection was the secret of his leniency towards his relatives. The young Cæsars were very popular, and the people who had borne so long with Domitian's crimes, would probably not suffer him to sacrifice to his fury the princes they looked upon as their future rulers.

There may have been another cause for the tyrant's hesitancy. The strange adventure of Minerva's statue, disarmed by a God more powerful than Jupiter, was still present to his memory, and he could not help thinking that he would perhaps, himself succumb, if he dared to attack the worshippers of that mysterious and terrible divinity.

What became of the Grand-Vestal amidst this general gloom and terror? Since the Emperor's return she had lived in continued anxiety. She found strength and courage to bear the burthen of her sorrows only in the devoted friendship of Cecilia and Aurelia, who scarcely left her.

Cecilia, wishing to complete the work commenced, spoke to her with affectionate perseverance of the celestial hopes of Christianity, and of the contempt which the greatest misfortunes must inspire to those who see in another life an everlasting reward and eternal repose. But the Grand-Vestal was too cruelly troubled to understand these words of comfort. She could think of nothing but the fearful prospect of a terrible death in the vault of the *Campus Sceleratus*, and it seemed to her that Christianity, far from saving her from this cruel fate, would only be another motive for the pontiffs to order the death of the unfaithful priestess who had renounced her creed.

She derived more comfort from the assurances given her by the divine Aurelia, who proposed to intervene near the Emperor as soon as she who had been to her a second mother would be seriously threatened, and to save her once more. Domitian would not resist when he should see his niece at his feet.

Domitian seemed to think no more of terrifying Rome with the execution of a Vestal, condemned in accordance with the most rigorous provisions of the ancient religious law whose traditions he wished to perpetuate. But, at last, this project, conceived long ago, presented itself anew to his mind. It would be the means of illustrating his reign.

He therefore sent for Marcus Regulus, and stated to him that he would proceed as High Pontiff against the Grand-Vestal, and this Metellus Celer, who had been initiated into the projects of Lucius Antonius, and consequently deserved death on two grounds of accusation.

"Yes, my lord," replied Regulus; "but Metellus Celer is not in your power; and without an accomplice to show to the people, the accusation against a Vestal becomes difficult to manage, and must, at all events, lose its intended effect."

"Regulus, it is for you to find this man; you took charge of the management of this business, you must bring about its successful termination."

The Emperor was dissatisfied. He dismissed the informer.

Decidedly, Regulus was unlucky. The two great undertakings to which he had devoted himself, and in which he had displayed so much activity, contributed little to strengthen his credit and to maintain him in favor. His denunciations

against the Christians had doubtless, seemed rash and dangerous, for the Emperor, far from provoking new revelations, would not suffer him to refer to the subject. The accusation against the Grand-Vestal had succeeded better, since Domitian had resolved to proceed; but, nevertheless, there was always some circumstance happening to diminish in the prince's mind the high opinion he had formed of the informer's great ability.

The disappearance of Metellus Celer at the very time he was wanted was not likely to revive the Emperor's singularly weakened confidence. Regulus understood this, and made extraordinary efforts to find Cornelia's pretended accomplice. He neglected all other business and took very little part in the persecution of the citizens. Yet, for a long time, he almost despaired of success. He had lost the spy he had boasted of having placed near Metellus. The young man having discovered that his servant was the agent of his worst enemy, treated him as he had done Parmenon.

At last, one day, when the disappointed informer was beseeching the gods to crown with success the search which was to lead an unfortunate young man to the most cruel death, a courier came to inform him that Metellus Celer had been seized in his retreat, and was now on his way to Rome, well secured in a closed litter, and under good escort.

The wretch hastened to carry this important news to the Emperor. But on his way to the Palatine-House, Regulus met with an adventure so strange that we must devote to it a new chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SATURNALIA.

TO go from his residence to the Palatine-House, Regulus had to cross the Forum. He found that spacious place filled with an immense crowd of people, enjoying themselves in a noisy and disorderly manner.

The informer suddenly remembered that it was the day of the Saturnalia, and this delirious multitude was entirely composed of slaves—temporarily the masters of Rome—and who were there only to give themselves up to the wildest revels and all the license permitted by a few days of freedom.

Marcus Regulus would have turned back, but it was too late. A slave, who was seated on the pretor's chair, had perceived him, and cried out:

"By Saturn, here comes, I believe, that rascal, Marcus Regulus! Lictors, let that man be arrested and brought before me!"

The individual who gave this singular order—which made the informer shudder—was one of our oldest acquaintances. It was Palæstrion, the slave porter of the divine Aurelia. He was accompanied by his huge dog, so well fed upon cooked frogs, and which he had sworn to set upon Regulus, the first day he should meet him.

Yes, it was Palæstrion, in person, no longer chained by the waist to the wall of his lodge; but Palæstrion triumphant, honored, obeyed; Palæstrion wearing the insignia of the urban pretor and sitting upon his chair, commanding to lictors, and giving orders which were as promptly carried out as the magistrate's.

He had hardly spoken when the lictors seized the informer amidst the joyful acclamations of the multitude. This Regulus, whose name made so many tremble, now stood, abashed and humbled, at the feet of the slave whose disdainful and ironical looks increased his anxiety. But how came Palæstrion to obtain this power and to preside over the tribunal of the pretor.

One word will suffice to explain this mystery: Palæstrion was the hero of the feast of Saturnalia.

On the evening of the sixteenth day of the Kalends of January, a pontiff had appeared, according to long established custom, under the portico of the temple of Saturn, situated in the centre of the Forum, and had cried thrice in a loud and solemn voice: *Saturnalia! Saturnalia! Saturnalia!*

At this proclamation, long expected by the impatient and tumultuous multitude, cries of joy rent the air, and a thousand voices replied to the priest by repeating the consecrated exclamation; *Io! Io! Saturnalia! Io! Saturnalia!*

In answer to this signal, gangs of slaves rush from every direction, invading the Forum with an impetuosity which the current of the Tiber would have scarcely attained had it suddenly broke through its dikes. All these slaves wear the cap of liberty, as though they had just been set free. Their joy is delirious and the air is filled with their songs and shouts. The last comers find no room in the crowded Forum, and they spread in every direction over the city which will remain during seven entire days the theatre of their wild revels and of licentious excesses authorized on this occasion by both law and custom.

Such was the inauguration of the Saturnalia; such the first outburst of the popular intoxication whose increasing manifestations ended only after every pleasure had been exhausted.

This season of liberty for the slave was also one of rejoicing for the master. It was the time for making friendly calls and sending presents. This ancient custom was generally observed by the poor and the rich, the humble and the great. Nobody would have liked to neglect it, and everything, from the precious jewel to the toy of trifling value, or even the bunch of onions from the little garden plot, was received with gratitude, as a memento of good omen for the coming year.

There is nothing better than this annual exchange of little gifts. We cannot, after eighteen hundred years, criticize a custom from which we have derived our own practice of New Year's gifts, and even our letters of congratulation and compliment, for at the time of the Saturnalia, people who could write exercised themselves in the flowery style of composition, sending graceful or pleasant epistles to their friends.

The Saturnalia were instituted in the remotest period of antiquity, in commemoration of that fabulous reign of Saturn, during which there was neither master nor slave; when everything was held in common, and piety, justice and concord reigned upon the earth. Succeeding generations had sought to perpetuate the memory of that happy time which the poets styled the Golden Age, by annual festivities which should recall that primitive equality, that peace and happiness, now flown forever.

In the principle, this feast was celebrated in one single day—on the fourteenth of the Kalends of January (December 19th) Julius Cæsar when he reformed the calendar, added two days to the month of December, which were claimed as belonging to the Saturnalia, and this was confirmed by a subsequent edict which fixed their legal duration to three days. Subsequently, the celebration of the *Sigillaria*, also in honor of Saturn, and of the feast of his wife *Ops*, the goddess of the earth, were added to the Saturnalia, extending their duration to seven days.

The male slaves alone enjoyed this short period of liberty in December; the women had their turn on the Kalends of March, when the year formerly commenced. The servants then became the mistresses, and the proudest matrons of the aristocracy had to submit to their exigencies. This feast, which lasted but one day, was styled *Matronalia.*

Banqueting was the principal source of enjoyment during the Saturnalia, and custom required that it should be at the expense of the masters. The latter were sometimes admitted to partake of their servants' banquet, and then in the midst of the general confusion and unrestrained license, they had to suffer at the hands of their drunken slaves, the violent reproaches, the offensive railing and harsh truths inspired by a revengeful recollection of evils suffered, or by a simple desire to debase those who were condemned to bear temporarily these trials. At other times, the slaves were even more exacting, and they compelled citizens of the highest rank to wait on them. In this case, the most ridiculous commands, orders the most difficult to execute, and subjection to the most fantastic whims were added as a bitter derision to the necessity of this temporary slavery.

The law authorized everything short of bodily violence, and the masters had to submit tamely. It was even expressly

forbidden to exercise reprisals upon the slave, when, after using to its full extent his vexatious privilege, he resumed the yoke of servitude.

These were not, however, the only joys to which these wretches aspired during these few days of interruption to their habitual condition of suffering. After the intemperance of the table, they must try the intemperance of honors. Having copied the vices of their masters, they must ape them in their dignities.

The Forum became necessarily the theatre upon which were given these grotesque representations of social organization. The slaves assumed the functions and privileges of the magistrates and civil functionaries. All this was done seriously, with comic importance, and with due regard for all the accessories appertaining to each different dignity, such as the costumes, the lictors, the curule chair, and even the rostrum for improvised orators. The functions of pretor were the most sought after in these satirical and often humorous mummeries of the "life in the open air" of the Forum, because they gave occasion to the most amusing decisions.

On this occasion, Palæstrion had been designated by the votes of his fellow slaves, in the mock election held for the office of urban pretor.

Palæstrion, the slave porter of the divine Aurelia—the niece of Domitian and future Empress of the Romans, had immediately conquered a consideration and importance proportionate to the supreme destinies of that young and noble matron. The servant reflects the greatness of his master, and this reflection had thrown around Palæstrion a sort of halo, the brightness of which he did not suspect.

No other slave had better enjoyed the liberty of the Saturnalia; never had such pomp decorated his humble person. Quicker than any one else, he had rid himself of the chains which held him captive in his lodge, and had rushed to the Forum, followed by his faithful dog. He had been one of the first to hear the proclamation of the Saturnalia.

To relate everything worthy of note that Palæstrion and his dog had accomplished during the first six days would require a volume.

He had plunged headlong into all the ardent pleasures of the Saturnalia; he had left far behind all who attempted to

follow him; he had particularly distinguished himself in those huge banquets worthy of Homer's heroes.

In one word Palæstrion, as we have already stated, was the hero of the saturnalia. He had been proclaimed the king of the festive board; and when from the *triclinia* were carried to the Forum the last scenes of this festival of liberty, upon which another sun was not to shine, the unanimous voice of his comrades enthusiastically proclaimed Palæstrion worthy of the dignified office of pretor.

Palæstrion donned bravely the magisterial robe, appointed his lictors; and sitting in the pretor's chair, prepared to perform his judicial duties. But a judge without a case to try, cuts a sorry figure, and poor Palæstrion saw with embarrassment the disappointed looks of the audience as the hours passed without a single pleader presenting himself into court, though the criers made themselves hoarse in inviting the people to test the prudence and justice of the learned judge.

Palæstrion's face was growing purple with shame as he listened to the increasing titter which circulated in the mirthful crowd, and the big sweat drops rolled from his brow. It was at this perplexing juncture that he caught sight of Regulus. The slave-pretor recognized immediately his quondam tempter, and, in a stentorian voice, ordered his arrest. He intended to carry his revengeful joke as far as the license of the saturnalia permitted, and with this view he called to his dog. The animal, who was circulating freely among the crowd, in two bounds took his place near his master's curule chair.

"Ah! Cerberus!" said Palæstrion, patting him on the back, "attention! old boy, we are going to have some fun!"

The dog wagged his tail and showed his double row of sharp teeth, as if he understood what was coming.

Marcus Regulus saw this, and his cheeks grew pale, as he asked himself what the slave's intentions might be.

The most savage clamors greeted the informer who had been recognized by the crowd. Palæstrion had reconquered all his waning popularity, for curiosity was awakened and every one looked for scenes of more than usual interest. A thousand voices mingled with the growls of the dog who, his glowing eyes fixed on his master's, only awaited a signal to spring upon the trembling wretch whom the lictors had brought to the bar of the tribunal.

"Io! Io! Saturnalia! Io! Io! Palæstrion!" repeated the multitude with wild excitement.

Palæstrion was enjoying his own triumph and the terror of Marcus Regulus. His silence and the ironical expression of his looks increased the intolerable anguish of his victim. At last, the slave-pretor extended his hand to command attention, and the tumult ceased as if by magic. The slaves looked on in breathless expectation.

"What is your name?" asked the magistrate, addressing Regulus.

"I am a citizen, and I protest against all acts of personal violence," replied the informer, trying to give some assurance to his voice.

"Very well," said the slave-pretor, "but this is the time of the saturnalia, and you are accused . . . "

"What charge can be trumped against me?" asked Regulus.

"Was it not you," replied Palæstrion, "who, by corrupt means, tempted the fidelity of the woman Doris, a slave in the household of the divine Aurelia, and brought upon her the punishment which caused her death? . . . What have you to reply?"

The informer shuddered, but remained silent.

"Was it not you again," resumed the magistrate, "who, concealing your name, came to a poor slave named Palæstrion to offer him his freedom, and who endeavored by your insidous questions to surprise the secrets of the divine Aurelia's household, thereby exposing said Palæstrion to perish, like Doris, under the public executioner's lash?"

"Palæstrion, Palæstrion," exclaimed Regulus in a supplicating tone, "I swear that my intentions towards you were sincere and it was not my fault if they were not realized."

"Hush! wretch . . . Here I am no longer Palæstrion, I am a judge who interrogates . . . Come, are these facts true or false? . . . By Saturn! take care that you do not prevaricate!"

But, instead of replying to this question, Regulus sprang back, uttering a piercing cry. This unexpected incident was caused by Cerberus. Pending the interrogatory, the dog had gradually approached the informer, and had finally inserted

his sharp fangs into the latter's thigh; such, at least, appeared to be the fact, from the manner in which the animal still held on to his tunic.

"Cerberus! Cerberus!" cried Palæstrion angrily.

The dog immediately let go his hold.

"Lictors! chastise this insubordinate animal who will not wait for the signal."

The lictors, detaching a few rods from their fasces, struck the dog who howled with pain. The crowd applauded this act of justice.

"Regulus," resumed the slave, evidently gratified by these public marks of approbation, "have you anything to say in justification of these charges? . . . Speak . . . I listen."

The wretched man could find only words of cowardly supplication.

"So," said Palæstrion, "you admit the truth of these allegations . . and you have nothing more to say . . . "

"Palæstrion, I swear it to you again . . I did not know . . . I could not know that I was exposing you to any danger."

"I am not concerned in this case, Regulus; cease, therefore, misunderstanding my words and pronouncing my name; the question at issue is the trade you follow and the misfortunes which result from your informations . . Is it not enough that you have attempted to introduce treachery under the roof of my noble mistress, and that a young girl has perished, a victim to the temptations of your gold? . . This is what you must justify yourself from . . . Or otherwise you cannot escape punishment. As for me, I despise the solicitations with which you tried to deceive me, and as a judge, I must forget them. For the last time I charge you to answer without equivocation."

Palæstrion had spoken these words with great dignity and firmness. The humble slave seemed to be gradually penetrated with the greatness of his functions, and he introduced the majesty of truth in the fiction undertaken for amusement.

Marcus Regulus, completely overwhelmed, could think of nothing except how he should effect his escape; his eyes wandered about anxiously, watching a favorable opportunity. But flight was no easy matter. Cerberus was there, an attentive sentinel, and all around, the serried ranks of the mul-

titude presented an impassable barrier. No friendly face met the informer's eager glance; he saw, everywhere, nothing but cruel smiles which told him plainly how much the spectacle of his anguish was enjoyed by those who waited for Palæstrion's judgment.

The pretor, silent and collected, was thinking of what sentence he should pronounce. A new incident here distracted the attention of the crowd. The melodious sounds of a flute were heard in the direction of the portico of Saturn's temple, and the pontiff was seen issuing from the sacred edifice, where he had been performing an expiatory sacrifice. He was accompanied by Misitius playing the harmonious instrument used upon such occasions. The crowd made way, respectfully, and the pontiff and his musician soon found themselves in front of the slave-pretor's court.

A drowning man catches at straws, and Regulus no sooner recognized the priest than he sprang towards him, claiming his protection in the most pitiful accents.

"Saturnalia!" cried Palæstrion, to stop the movement which the pontiff, surprised at finding Regulus in this embarrassing predicament, was about to make in his favor; "Saturnalia! this man belongs to me until the sentence I am going to pass shall have been executed!"

"It is true," said the priest, "we are in the days of Saturnalia, and you are the masters! Regulus, may the gods protect thee, I can do nothing."

The pontiff went away, leaving to his fate Regulus who trembled with rage and gave vent to his disappointment in the most fearful imprecations. Misitius would have followed the pontiff, but Palæstrion would not permit it.

"Flute-player!" he cried, making a gesture of command, "your presence is required here. Your instrument must mark time for the exercise to which I shall condemn Regulus as a just punishment for his crimes. I command you to stay!"

The unfortunate Misitius would have rather been a hundred miles from Rome, than to find himself in the presence of the wretch he had so much cause to fear; but it was as impossible for Misitius to disobey Palæstrion, as for Regulus to escape from the punishment about to be inflicted.

Misitius stopped, and waited patiently for further orders.

The look that Regulus gave him made the poor fellow shudder.

Palæstrion, seated on his curule chair proclaimed silence and announced that he would now pronounce the sentence of the culprit.

The crowd listened with eager curiosity.

"It appears," said the slave-pretor in a solemn voice, and using the consecrated formula, "that Marcus Regulus, informer, here present, is the author, through his seductions, of the death of a young girl named Doris, a slave in the household of the divine Aurelia. Consequently, I order that he shall be tossed in a blanket, and that the flute-player shall accompany with the sounds of his instrument the execution of this sentence!"

The whole Forum shook under the thunder of applause which greeted the judgment of the wise Palæstrion. No sentence could have been imagined to crown with a more diverting practical joke the feast of the Saturnalia and to reach, at the same time, the much feared and hated man upon whom it was to be played.

A large circle was formed around the downcast informer; twelve athletic slaves seized him and, despite his struggles, stretched him at full length on a wide carpet, which impatient hands were already lifting; and Misitius commenced playing a symphony amidst the plaudits of the delighted crowd and the cries, repeated by a thousand voices, of:

"Saturnalia! Io! Saturnalia! Io! Io! Palæstrion!"

Regulated by the modulations of Misitius' flute, the cadenced motion was accomplished with a perfection that gave it additional force. The informer's body scarcely touched the carpet than it was again thrown to a prodigious height. These aerial evolutions could be witnessed from all parts of the Forum, and the savage acclamations which greeted it showed how keenly the multitude enjoyed the distress of the wretched Regulus. His most cruel enemy must have pitied him!

At last, not perhaps through merciful feelings, but because every punishment must have an end, Palæstrion ordered the tossers to stop. Marcus Regulus fell back once more on the carpet, whence he was permitted to roll on the pavement. In a moment he stood on his feet. His face was deathly

pale; his eyes flashed with rage; but his voice failed him, he could not utter a word. Palæstrion ordered the crowd to give way and let Regulus go where he pleased. The wretch, still dizzy from his recent performance, and assailed by the jeers of his tormentors, availed himself of this permission and fled with the precipitancy of one who escapes from some terrible danger.

Palæstrion had come down from his curule chair.

"Regulus!" he cried, when the informer was at some distance, "I am no longer thy judge, but I made an oath and it must be fulfilled!"

Then, calling Cerberus, he pointed out to him the retreating form of the informer. The dog sprang after him with the speed of an arrow. A few bounds sufficed him to overtake Regulus, who uttered a terrible cry and turned to throw on Palæstrion a look full of deadly hate.

"Cerberus! Cerberus! enough! come back, sir!" Palæstrion called to his dog; and his voice had a satisfied and triumphant tone. He had kept his word and consummated his vengeance. At the sound of his master's voice, the obedient dog had let go the leg into which he had inserted his sharp-pointed row of teeth, he returned quietly bringing with him a piece of Regulus' tunic as a trophy.

Palæstrion was carried in triumph to the banquet of the last night of the Saturnalia.

On the next morning he had resumed his chain in the porter's lodge for another year. So he thought at least, for the poor wretch could not foresee what was about to happen.

Regulus, notwithstanding his cruel mishap, had not renounced his design of advising the Emperor of Metellus Celer's capture. He arrived at the Palatine-House, still trembling with rage and fear, and thirsting for revenge, but prepared to dissemble in order the better to secure it. At sight of the informer's haggard looks and disordered dress, Domitian was struck with surprise.

"What is the matter with you, Regulus?" he asked, "and what has happened?"

"Nothing worth mentioning, my lord . . . As I passed through the Forum some miserable slaves insulted me . . . But I would not delay the important news I bring you . . . Metellus Celer will be in Rome to-morrow . . He is in sure hands!"

"Have you witnesses to secure his condemnation?" asked the Emperor with an eagerness which proved that this news did not find him indifferent.

"Yes, my lord, we have three whose confession leave no doubt as to the intimate relations existing between Metellus Celer and the Grand-Vestal. Those three witnesses are: Misitius, the flutist at the sacrifices, the same who corresponded with Lucius Antonius, and who also had charge of delivering to Cornelia the letter of Metellus Celer which you have read; Gellia, the wife of the same Misitius, and, finally, Palæstrion, the porter-slave of your niece Aurelia."

"Have those people said what they know?"

"No, my lord," replied the informer, with a wicked smile. "But Ravinus is there, and he is a great master in the art of making those speak who wish to preserve an ill-timed silence."

"Very well, Regulus. This very night I shall convene the college of Pontiffs . . . and to-morrow . . . "

"My lord," said the informer, interrupting Domitian, "to night will be the last night of the Saturnalia; during which no sentence can be pronounced . . It will be perhaps better to wait until to-morrow night . . I require this delay, moreover, in order to give you more complete proofs."

"So be it, then," said the Emperor. "I shall be to-morrow night in my house in Alba . . See that the evidence be laid in proper time before the pontiffs, so as to avoid all hesitancy . . Go, I rely on your zeal."

Regulus made an obeisance to the Emperor, and left the Palatine-House, with his heart filled with the first joy he had tasted on that fatal day. Instead of returning home, he now sought the shortest road to arrive at the cave dug into the most rugged side of Mount Esquiline, and which served as an habitation for the mysterious Ravinus. It was late in the night when he reached the cave. Ravinus was asleep.

"Get up! Ravinus, I must speak to you!" cried the informer, shaking him roughly.

Ravinus growled, pretty much as a bear would if disturbed in his lair, and arising from the wild beast's skin which served him the purpose of a bed, stood up in all the majesty of his colossal stature.

"It is me! it is Regulus!" the informer prudently hastened to say.

Ravinus blew upon the ashes in his hearth and lighted a pine torch which he made fast against the rocky wall of the cave:

"Here I am," he then Replied to Regulus, as he seated himself on a rough bench. "What is it that you wish? . . Speak . . ."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEN OF WOES.

THE pine torch lighted two things: the cave of Ravinus, and Ravinus himself. Both were horrible to look at.

Imagine a recess of moderate width, but the depth of which, shrouded in darkness, could not be estimated. Rough masonry work, whose stones were blackened by time or green-coated by dampness, supported the earth and prevented slides. In whichever direction the eye wandered in this fearful abode, it met not a single familiar article of household furniture, but objects of strange and terrible shapes—some suspended from the ceiling or hung on the walls, others lying on the floor or sealed into some enormous block of wood or stone.

These fearful objects which make one shudder as he looks at them, are instruments of torture. It would be difficult to enumerate them all, and we have no desire to entertain the reader with their hideous nomenclature.

Ravinus is the public executioner, the torturer, who lives alone, far from all human beings, rejected by Rome which he is not permitted to inhabit. There never was a more frightful type of ancient barbarity. Over his hairy shoulders, to which hang athletic arms, appears an enormous head crowned with red hair as coarse and shaggy as that of Calydon's boar.

No feeling of pity ever softened his savage features, lighted by round eyes that roll vacantly under bushy eyebrows. Ravinus is the embodiment of stupidity, but it is cruelty, not idiotcy which has destroyed his intellect. The shrieks of suffering can alone rouse him from his apathy. When the victim begs for mercy, he replies by a frightful smile; when the bones crushed by the instrument of torture pierce through the flesh, Ravinus is in ecstacies.

The life of this wretch had passed amidst the tears and groans of victims. Almost every day he was sent for by matrons whose delicate hands would have tired chastising their slaves. He would then strike with such fury that, unless he was stopped, death inevitably followed, as it happened in the case of the unhappy Doris.

Sometimes also, but much less often, poor wretches were sent to his cave, to be tortured; he marked those days with a white pebble and dreamed of them in his sleep.

Such was the man whose services Regulus came to secure. Their interview was short and decisive.

On the evening of the following day, towards the tenth hour, the interior of Ravinus' den was illuminated by the red glare of a large fire. Two aids were already preparing the instruments of torture. Prominent amidst the iron claws, the pincers and the sharp blades heating in this fire was an iron chair which had been brought to a white heat and emitted sparks.

Without, the night was dark and the icy December wind blew furiously. The snow-flakes fell thick and fast, and swept by the storm, penetrated into the cave and fell, hissing, on the red coals.

A chariot stopped at the entrance of the den, and a party of men, alighting from it, entered the gloomy abode of Ravinus. These men were the pontiffs, accompanied by their scribe who was to take down the depositions of the victims. They were followed by Marcus Regulus.

Soon, the distant noise of numerous steps, with which mingled occasionally the most heart-rending shrieks, was heard. The victims were approaching. Three litters, borne by vigorous slaves, now halted at the mouth of the cave and were immediately surrounded by Ravinus and his aids. They drag out their prey and the slaves withdraw.

Ravinus returns near the fire, carrying in his arms a young woman, whose cries of terror he smothers with his large hand. He drops her on the damp soil of the cave. It is Gellia, the graceful, lively little woman. She has fainted.

Misitius came in next, struggling manfully against one of the torturer's aids. At the sight of his wife, lying senseless on the soil, the poor flutist uttered a shriek of rage and made a desperate effort to free himself. But a fearful blow struck

behind his head stretched him, lifeless, near Gellia. The aids, picking him up, carried him to the rack placed in readiness in an angle of the cave, and tied him securely by the hands and feet upon the fearful instrument.

Finally, Palæstrion made his appearance, led by one of the aids.

The poor fellow seemed struck with stupor. He walked submissively, but staggering like a drunken man, not understanding why he was brought there, and scarcely able to see what was going on around him.

But his wandering eyes at last rested upon Regulus, whom he recognized by the lurid glare of the fire. At this sight, his chest heaved convulsively, his teeth chattered, but fear paralyzed his tongue. He knew now where he was and who had brought him there. Another glance had shown him Ravinus, the public executioner, the fearful spectre that haunted the dreams of slaves!

A few hours before, Palæstrion was sitting in his lodge, thinking of the glorious Saturnalia which could return only in another year; and thinking also, perhaps, with grim joy of the vengeance wreaked upon Marcus Regulus. Suddenly, armed men entered his lodge, struck off the fetters, mark of his bondage, and proceeded to bind his wrists. He invoked the name of his noble mistress whose house was thus forcibly entered, but the men replied that they acted by order of the Emperor, and the poor slave dared not resist the supreme authority.

It was also in the name of the Emperor that Misitius and Gellia were ordered to enter the separate litters in which they had been brought. Gellia felt a fearful presentiment that Misitius was lost and she would die with him. This is why she gave vent to her groans and shrieks, during the journey. Misitius, remembering the declaration signed by Regulus to the effect that he had voluntarily revealed the conspiracy of Lucius Antonius, felt more hopeful. It was only when they alighted at the entrance of the torturer's cave, that new misgivings rushed to his mind, and the rough manner in which he saw his wife seized by Ravinus, roused his ire.

But the three victims were now in the power of their persecutors.

Ravinus, taking a huge pair of tongs, pulled the iron chair

from the fire, and made a step towards Palæstrion. The poor slave threw himself at the feet of Marcus Regulus, crying in heart-rending accents:

"Mercy! O mercy! my lord."

The informer smiled, and replied coldly:

"Palæstrion, yesterday at the Forum, did you listen to me when I, also, craved mercy at your hands? . . . Moreover, I am not the master here; you are in the hands of the pontiffs who themselves, only obey the will of the Emperor."

And he made a sign to Ravinus. The torturer clasped the slave in his powerful arms, and lifting him, as he would have done a child, seated him on the red-hot chair, where an iron band held him fast.

The shriek that escaped Palæstrion's lips would have moved the most obdurate heart; Ravinus replied to it by a savage laugh! . . . Palæstrion howled, screamed and foamed at the mouth; Ravinus revived the fire, tightened the screws and continued to laugh.

But God has not placed the infinite in pain; there comes a time when in the midst of tortures the power to feel seems exhausted.

Soon, under the rapid action of the fire, Palæstrion only groaned feebly, and Ravinus no longer laughed. Nothing was heard now but the crepitation of the flesh as it burned, and the crackling of the bones as they were bursted by the action of the fire. This was the proper time to commence the interrogatory.

Palæstrion, the porter-slave of Aurelia's house, had been necessarily a witness of the numerous visits paid by Metellus Celer to the Grand-Vestal whilst the latter was the guest of the Emperor's niece, and he must have surprised some facts tending to prove the alleged intimacy, or, at least, must have learned those facts from the conversations of the other slaves.

The patient must be made, at all cost, to reveal these facts. One of the pontiffs and the scribe approached . . . But why repeat the questions asked of a wretch whose will, conquered by the most atrocious pain, must necessarily succumb, and whose life, besides, was fast ebbing. The pontiffs obtained all the avowals they wanted. Palæstrion merely replied yes or no, according to the nature of the question. When they

released him from the iron chair, the poor slave was dying. His body was but a mass of carbonized flesh. They threw him in a corner where he soon expired.

Ravinus then passed to the rack upon which Misitius lay, still senseless. A turn of the screw, which distended painfully his limbs, soon awoke him from his torpor.

Gellia had been confided to the care of one of the aids. She had not yet recovered from her swoon, but the pressure of the clogs on her ankles soon revived her.

The flutist and his wife should be tortured at the same time. So Regulus had decided after due reflection; for, should either possess personal firmness, he still hoped to conquer Misitius through Gellia's sufferings, and Gellia through her husband's tortures.

The confessions of these young people were of more importance even than Palæstrion's, for, Misitius, who carried Metellus Celer's letters, and most probably Cornelia's answers, must have known what this correspondence contained; and Gellia must have learned it from Misitius.

Then, had not Misitius played the flute whilst Regulus was being tossed in the air!

We shall not dwell upon the description of the rack which distended horribly the limbs, breaking the articulations; nor the clogs which, placed above the ankles, crushed them slowly by a gradual pressure. Neither shall we describe the hot steel points, the sharp claws and hundred like implements used to multiply the sufferings of the victims. These fearful inventions of Roman barbarity will be found fully described in the works of ancient writers, and particularly in the *Acts of the Martyrs.*

The sufferings of these young people, their youth and Gellia's beauty, presented such a moving sight that Helvius Agrippa, who had already shown pity at Palæstrion's tortures, proposed to release Misitius and his wife before their limbs were hopelessly injured.

Marcus Regulus darted a sinister look at this too humane priest.

The other pontiffs replied that the orders of the Emperor were to spare no pains to arrive at a complete proof.

Misitius claimed that the declaration given to him by Regulus was a safeguard which could not be violated without perjury.

"What are you complaining about?" replied the informer, with ironical and frightful calm. "You are not persecuted for the Lucius Antonius conspiracy. The matter for which you are here is simply concerning Metellus Celer and the Grand-Vestal, whose culpable intrigues you have favored, and whose incest you have prepared."

"That is false!" cried the unfortunate flutist, "I know nothing of this! . . "

"We shall see about that, directly," replied Regulus.

"I am a citizen! . . . Gellia is *uxor* . . . These titles protect us! . . . We cannot be put to the torture! . . . "

Under the Republic, in Cicero's time, this Roman cry, this invocation of the city's rights, would have saved Misitius and Gellia; but the era of the Tiberius, the Neros and the Domitians did not admit this means of escaping from the cruelty of tyrants. Had not the Emperor shed the blood of the most illustrious citizens, and invented the most horrible tortures for them?

Ravinus turned the crank of the rack; his aid tightened the clogs.

"Dear Misitius!"

"Poor Gellia!"

Such were the first cries simultaneously uttered.

"I lost you! . . I lost you!" repeated the unhappy husband, who seemed to feel only his wife's pain.

"Misitius . . dear Misitius! . . is it not to you I owe my life and happiness?" exclaimed Gellia, who, having lost all hope, commenced to show an admirable courage.

"Confess! confess what you know, and the torture will stop!" said the pontiffs.

"You are monsters!" replied Gellia, groaning painfully. "It is a good time to stop, when my poor crushed feet will never bear me up any more! . . Do what you will with me, now! . . I know nothing! . . . You cannot wrench a single word of falsehood from me!"

The aid increased the pressure of the clogs to such an extent, that the unfortunate little woman writhed with pain and uttered fearful shrieks, but she still repeated with energy:

"I know nothing! . . I shall say nothing! . . I will not lie! . . It shall not be said that I have been an accomplice in your crimes!"

Misitius, although bound fast, was making tremendous efforts to come to his wife's assistance.

"My lords, my lords," cried the unfortunate Misitius, and his voice would have moved a wild beast. "I call the gods to witness! Gellia knows nothing . . Cease torturing her . . I alone received the letters . . . "

"What were their contents?"

"I have never read them . . . "

"Who handed them to the Grand-Vestal?"

"An unknown person . . . "

"You know something else?"

"No! . . For mercy's sake, my lords, release Gellia . . "

A new turn of the crank prevented Misitius from saying more. The poor fellow uttered piercing shrieks.

Astonished by a resistance to which he was not accustomed, Ravinus multiplied his efforts. His cruel laugh no longer added to the horror of the scene. Helvius Agrippa mingled his useless prayers to the agonizing groans of the victims.

Soon their limbs were reduced to a sort of bloody pulp which could not be distended any further by the rack or crushed by the clogs. The hot copper blades and iron claws were then brought into use to revive pain in those exhausted bodies which hardly preserved strength enough to writhe under the burning embrace of the heated iron instruments.

Helvius Agrippa, as Dion Cassius testifies, could bear no longer the sight of this fearful agony, and dropped dead from sheer horror.

This incident did not stop the cruel work. Ravinus and his men called in aid all their ingenuity, while Marcus Regulus and the pontiffs, bending over the dying victims, listened eagerly for their last words. But their lips clenched in the last throes of death, now uttered but faint groans. Misitius, however, made a supreme effort:

"Save Gellia!" he said faintly, "save Gellia! I am going to confess . . ."

"Misitius! . . . Misitius! . . ." cried the brave young woman, gathering the little strength that was left in her for this noble appeal, "my body is but a crushed, bleeding mass, you cannot save me! . . . Do not give those monsters the satisfaction of having uselessly vanquished us. . . I am dying. . . Farewell. . . dear husband . . . farewell!"

"She is dead!" exclaimed a pontiff.

Misitius uttered a cry of rage, and expired, hurling a last curse at his torturers.

Ravinus could gloat over his work. Four dead bodies were lying at his feet.

Marcus Regulus and the pontiffs got into their chariot and hastened to meet Domitian, who awaited them with the college of pontiffs to decide upon this serious religious accusation.

This is all that was ever known concerning the manner in which Cornelia's death was resolved on that fatal night.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLEMENS CALLS ON GURGES.

THE venerable pontiff of the Christians was kneeling in prayer before the image of the Crucified Saviour, when two young women, panting with haste and emotion, and their faces bathed with tears, entered precipitately his humble abode.

"My lord! my lord! . . . save the Grand-Vestal! . . . She has been condemned! . . . The sentence is being executed! . . . She will perish! . . ."

Thus spoke, together, Aurelia and Cecilia, for it was they who had sought the venerable Clemens.

"My lord! my lord!" repeated the former as she embraced the pontiff's feet; "save Cornelia! . . . Save her who has been a mother to me! . . . Oh save her, my lord! . . ."

"Rise, madam," said the holy priest, "it is God alone to whom we must pray kneeling! . . . What," he resumed, "can it be that they have pronounced that barbarous sentence? . . ."

Clemens, since his interview with the Grand-Vestal, watched over her with fatherly solicitude. He foresaw that the day was not far when he should hear of her condemnation. He was not surprised, therefore, at this news, although the march of events had been so rapid that he would be so soon called upon to keep the promise made to her for whom he implored the assistance of heaven.

"My lord! . . . she is in the hands of the pontiffs," exclaimed the divine Aurelia, in answer to the question of the man of God. "They have torn her from my arms. . . The cruel men. . . They would not listen to my prayers. . . And when I spoke as the niece of the Emperor, they told me I must submit to his orders. . . Ah! my lord. . . You alone can help Cornelia. . . I have beseeched Domitian himself . . . and I have been harshly repulsed! . . ."

The tears of the young girl would not permit her to proceed

"My lord," said Cecilia, scarcely less moved than her friend, "what we have seen is fearful! . . ."

"What has happened?" asked Clemens. "My daughter, it is important that I should be completely informed. . . . Conceal nothing from me. . ."

"Father," replied the young woman, "for several days past my noble mistress and I have not left the Grand-Vestal, who was continually in prey to the most sinister forebodings. . . Yesterday, these sad presentiments increased so fearfully that we remained with her the whole night. . . Alas! her involuntary terror was but too well founded!

"I spoke to her of you, father, and of the strength with which our God has clothed you; but she said your hopes were vain . . . and that if she were to fall into the abyss, your hands would be powerless to rescue her. I endeavored to drive away those thoughts of bitter despair, the best way I could. . . I read to her passages from our sacred books, where Christian souls find comfort in learning resignation. . . My noble mistress united her efforts with mine. . . She spoke of her influence near the Emperor, whose beloved niece she was. . ."

"I believed it! . . . Oh! yes, I believed it . . . but it is not so! . . ." interrupted Aurelia, and her voice was tremulous with emotion and wounded pride.

"But," resumed Cecilia, "it was impossible to soothe the involuntary anguish which now and then caused the unfortunate Vestal to start and shudder. At other times her courage would revive, and she would try to smile at her fears. But there was an hour when a strange delirium came upon her suddenly. . . Was it a vision . . . or simply the effect of a morbid fancy? . . . It seemed as if she were

surrounded by shadows, and bloody spectres had risen before her in the darkness. . . She moved her hands to push them back, and cried in broken words, full of anguish: 'I see them! . . . They are dying! . . . They are murdered! . . . I am innocent! . . . This is horrible! . . . Oh! the monsters! . . . They triumph! . . . Torture has put me in their power! . . .' And she fell back, exhausted by this scene of feverish excitement, which was the last during that night of woes!

"When morning came, she was calm; it seemed that her fears had vanished. . . She was conversing quietly with us, and expressing regret at the uneasiness and trouble she had caused us, when a great tumult of voices was heard at the doors—still closed at that early hour—of the *Atrium Regium*.

"'Here they are!' she cried shuddering, 'I had not deceived myself! . . . They come to lead me to execution! . . They sentenced me during the night!'

"But, singular to relate, her voice no longer had that wild tone which had so much frightened us. . . The pontiffs then entered the room in which we were assembled, and apprized her very abruptly, that the Emperor had pronounced her guilty, and she must follow them. We remained thunderstruck, while Cornelia, raising her hands to heaven, invoked Vesta and her other gods, and repeated this exclamation: *What! Cæsar pronounces me incestuous, I whose sacrifices have made him conquer, have made him triumph!* (*)

"Oh! father, as a Christian, I suffered to see her thus confiding still in the false gods who caused her loss. . . But I admired her courage, and I was astonished at her proud demeanor. . . I am but a poor daughter of the people, and I had but my tears with which to move those who had already seized this innocent virgin. My noble mistress, the daughter of the Cæsars, humbled herself before these men, and beseeched them—she has told you so, herself, O father, they would not even listen to her! . . ."

"My lord," resumed Aurelia, "when she whom, since my infancy, I venerated as my own mother, had disappeared, I ran, almost distracted, to the palace, to ask her release of

(*) Pliny, Lib. iv., ep. 11.

the Emperor. . . He, also, had returned to Rome with all haste, doubtless in order to preside as High-Pontiff at this barbarous execution.

"How can I describe to you my anguish? My lord, I dragged myself in the dust. . . I called upon Domitian in the dearest names. . . But he remained immovable implacable! . . . He repulsed me, his niece, with angry gestures and passionate words, among which your name, that of my relations and my own were frequently mingled. . . . He spoke of the Christians with fearful threats. . . His vengeance would soon reach them! . . Finally, the Emperor, from whom I had hitherto received but kindness, no longer controlled his passion . . . he even went so far as to designate me as the accomplice of I know not what secret scheme, which he intended to punish in the most striking manner.

"After an hour of vain efforts to move his pity, I left the palace, feeling less fear of Domitian's anger than despair at not having obtained mercy for the dear friend about to perish amidst the most fearful torments! . . . I then remembered, my lord, that Cornelia, in her delirium, last night, said that the pontiff of the Christians had promised to save her, but she placed little reliance on this promise, as its fulfillment was impossible.

"I have come to you with Cecilia, who has sustained my courage, by telling me that I must have faith in your words, and if you had made this promise, it would be realized! . . . My lord! my lord! perhaps the Grand-Vestal, notwithstanding her doubts, still entertains some hope! . . . It would be dreadful if at the supreme hour she could think that you have deceived her! . . . Oh! I conjure you, if indeed it be in your power, to save her from that awful fate!"

"Madam, said the pontiff, a poor old man like me is weaker than all other men, and by myself I can do nothing! But the God I serve is master of life and death, and it was in His name I made a promise which I have not forgotten! . . . Be comforted, madam, and hope in His almighty power! . . . I am going to ask Him to guide my steps and to assist me in what I shall undertake! . . . I have an abiding confidence that your desires and mine will be granted."

The priest knelt and raised his venerable hands to heaven. Cecilia, kneeling at his side, commenced to pray fervently. The daughter of the Cæsars imitating this example, bowed her head for the first time to the God of the Christians.

After a short invocation, the pontiff rose, and taking his pilgrim's staff, prepared to depart.

"Madam," he said to Aurelia, "return to your home . . . and let hope follow you. . I shall not prevent the barbarous execution which all Rome will witness. . . But I shall give back to you the friend whose life you came to ask me. . . Go, madam . . . and let me commence my work."

"What, my lord," exclaimed the young girl deeply moved by so much devotion, but surprised and uneasy about the old man's safety; "what! you are starting alone! . . Whither are you going? . . . Is it thus you will save the Grand-Vestal? . . . Permit me to unite my efforts to yours! . . . Riches . . . slaves . . . litters . . . all that I possess is yours . . You will need these resources to insure success!"

"Madam," replied Clemens, with a gentle smile, "I am the pastor of a people, little numerous it is true, but which would rise as one man and accompany me to Rome, if I said but one word! You see that arms would not be wanting, and that I can dispense with your slaves! . . . I do not wish to corrupt any one, and, therefore, all the treasures of the earth would be of no use to me. . . As for your litters, this staff will suffice to sustain my old age. . . I need only the protection of my God. . . Return to Rome, madam, and carry with you the hope that Providence will deign to rescue from the abyss, the innocent virgin for whom we have prayed together!"

Aurelia took the hand of the venerable priest and carried it respectfully to her lips, bathing it with grateful tears, and Clemens then departed.

From the day the holy old man had acquired the conviction that sooner or later, Domitian would plunge the Grand-Vestal into the vault of the *Campus Sceleratus*, he had resolved to save her. He knew that the Vestal buried alive would live two days and perhaps more, in that subterranean abode where everything was arranged to secure the lingering death of the victim. When, therefore, the slab which closed the entrance to the shaft would be sealed and covered with earth,

and superstitious terror would make the spot a solitude, prayer, that mute supplication to Him who is all powerful, would ascend above this abyss of despair, and God would manifest his power.

But Clemens did not wish a crowd of spectators to witness the miracle, which faith, that power by which mountains are moved, already showed him as being accomplished in the darkness of night. He sought not to astonish Rome by some prodigy which might draw persecution upon his brethren, but merely to save from a horrible death the virgin who, at the last hour, would remember perhaps his promise.

One devoted man would suffice besides, and from the first time he had met him, he had foreseen that Gurges would be this man. And the more he had studied him, the more he had become convinced that the designator of funerals would not refuse to give shelter to the Grand-Vestal, and conceal her from all investigations, if it should be suspected that the virgin buried in the bowels of the earth, had been rescued from a certain death.

This is why Clemens had told Gurges that he would probably come to him one day. And this why the holy priest, entering Rome by the Capena-gate, went to knock at the door of the most fervent worshipper of Venus-Libitina, the goddess of funerals.

"The pontiff of the Christians," exclaimed Gurges, astonished beyond measure at the sight of the old man; "Oh! my lord! . . . my lord! . . ."

And the designator, unable to restrain his emotion, burst into tears. The poor fellow was in great trouble. Not only he had learned, like everybody else in Rome, the great news of the Grand-Vestal's sentence, but the pontiffs—and this was what made him indignant as well as sorrowful—had sent for the finest funeral litter in his shop, to carry the victim to the place of execution. Gurges had refused, had even offered resistance; but the pretorians who brought the order, made short work of the designator and his vespillos, and the litter, forcibly obtained, might be even now bearing the Grand-Vestal towards the *Campus Sceleratus*.

To the sorrow felt by the good designator was now mingled a bitter anxiety; what if the unfortunate Cornelia should think that he, Gurges—a man whom she had honored

with her esteem—had consented to furnish one of the instruments of her torture! And besides, how could he bear the idea that she had been carried to her death in the very litter which he used on great occasions only, when he wished to do special honor to Venus Libitina.

"Oh! my lord! my lord," repeated Gurges in his trouble, "if you only knew!"

"I know it, my son," replied Clemens, who did not understand the full import of this exclamation. "Yes, the Grand-Vestal is going to perish!"

And as the apparent grief of the designator seemed to offer a good opportunity for broaching the important subject, he continued:

"Do you remember, Gurges, that I told you once: Some day perhaps I shall come to you as you have come to me! and you replied: In any place, at any time, and for any cause, I devote myself to the pontiff of the Christians! . . . I have remembered those words, and here I am! . . . My son, I come to you to propose that together we shall save the Grand-Vestal."

Gurges recoiled upon hearing this unexpected proposition. But it was not simply with surprise; there was fear in his involuntary motion. He looked around anxiously; and sure that no indiscreet ear could hear his words, he approached near the pontiff.

"Can you think of it, my lord," he whispered in his ear. "What! I save the Grand-Vestal? . . . That is impossible!"

"It can be done, Gurges. The victims buried in the vault of the *Campus Sceleratus* die only after a lingering agony! You see therefore that it is possible!"

Gurges understood, or thought he did, what the old man intended undertaking, and he shuddered as he muttered in a scarcely audible voice:

"And religion? my lord. . . And the anger of the gods? . . ."

Clemens could not refrain a smile. Gurges, in his great trouble, did not remember that he was speaking to the pontiff of the Christians. But the hesitancies to be conquered were inspired by the vain terrors of ancient superstition.

"My son," said the pontiff, "you seem to fear that we may be overheard. . . Take me to the most retired room

in your house. . . Perhaps I may prove to you that you condemn, yourself, a religion which commands such atrocities, and that you have nothing to fear from the anger of your powerless gods."

This mysterious interview between the pontiff of the Christians and the designator of pagan ceremonies, was quite protracted. When Gurges returned, accompanying Clemens to the door, he had accepted the proposal to unite his efforts with those of the old man. Yet, it could be seen that, notwithstanding his resolution, he was anxious and troubled.

The pontiff continued to encourage him:

"Farewell, my son," he said, as they parted; "your promise to serve me when I would call on you has not been vain. . . Thanks for your assistance! . . . Now, have confidence in the result; we shall succeed. At the appointed hour I shall wait for you near the tomb of that unfortunate woman whom I have promised to save. Until that solemn hour, farewell!"

Clemens, when he found himself on the public way, was struck with the general silence and solitude of those streets and places, hitherto so noisy and full of life.

The old man understood that this universal desolation was in consequence of the great atonement which was being accomplished in the *Campus Sceleratus*. He stopped and looked in the direction of the fatal spot.

"O Rome," he murmured, "city of cursed impurities! . . Thou mournest because thou believest that one of thy virgins has broken her vows of chastity! . . . Almighty God! receive this homage to one of the greatest virtues of Thy faith, but Oh! do not permit that this fearful sacrifice be consummated. . . . Sustain the victim against her own despair . . . until I shall come to deliver her in Thy name! . ."

The pontiff returned among his brethren, withdrew to the solitude of his chamber, and remained wrapt in prayer until the time appointed for his meeting with Gurges.

Meanwhile, the designator was plunged in deep meditation. His feelings, when thinking of the awful undertaking in which he was about to embark, will be easily understood. However, Gurges did not hesitate. He even smiled at the thought that he would be the deliverer of the Grand-Vestal, and thereby remove the bad opinions she might have

formed concerning the litter he had been compelled to let the pontiffs use.

Clemens had easily awakened in this generous nature, horror for the cruel deed about to be committed, and dissipated his vain apprehension of the anger of the gods.

On the other hand, the former Vespillo who had so often broken into the tombs to procure the teeth and hair which he sold to Eutrapeles, could hardly be deterred by scruples of conscience from undertaking the proposed expedition. But was the thing feasible? He had believed it so, at first, but now, the more he thought of it, the greater the difficulty appeared. Shaking his head dubiously, our friend Gurges soliloquized, as was his wont, in the following manner:

"It is possible, said the pontiff of the Christians. . . Yes, it is possible, with the assistance of a certain number of Vespillos! . . But we must be alone, this old man and I. . . It is true that it would not be prudent to associate others to this undertaking! . . But what shall we do? The vault is closed with a wall against which the earth is piled up to the level of the ground. Will my efforts suffice to destroy all this work of Ravinus and his aids? . . Well! let us suppose that we have got the Grand-Vestal out of that vault. What shall we do with her? A head of hair or a handful of teeth may be hidden under one's tunic, and nobody the wiser! . . But this means of concealment cannot be applied to a woman! . . This Christian pontiff has not foreseen objections which are quite serious! . . We must, however, get out of this dilemma! . ."

Thereupon, Gurges fell again in deep thought, and taxed his imaginative faculties to their utmost capacity. A vague smile soon flitted upon his lips, announcing that the solution of the problem was presenting itself to his mind. He was thinking of the small, solitary house in which Cecilia had formerly lived with her father, and which, ever since their removal, he had stoutly refused to let out, looking reverentially upon it as the sanctuary of his first affections. It is certain that the Grand-Vestal could remain in security for some time, at least, in this shelter. But how get her there? The distance was great from the *Campus Sceleratus* to the Maximus Circus, near which this little house was situated. It was necessary to cross nearly the entire width of the city of Rome; and what might not happen during this long journey?

But Gurges rejoiced in difficulties; and when he had once got hold of his first idea, the others were not long following. His plan was soon made. Casting off all anxiety from his countenance, he called four of his strongest vespillos, and gave them his orders.

They were to prepare his best closed litter, in such a way as to give it a gloomy and funeral appearance outside; but its interior should be lined with the whitest and softest wool, and decorated with wreaths of flowers. On the following night, towards the twelfth hour, they were to go with this litter, under the portico of the temple of Safety; to bandage their eyes as soon as they would arrive there, and to wait silent and motionless until his arrival.

"I shall not be long coming," continued Gurges, "preceding a person who will then enter the litter, and who must not be seen! . . Let him tremble who would infringe this command! . . He would fall dead at my feet! . . But I shall immediately untie your bandages; and you will then carry the litter, on a run, as far as my little house near the Flaminius Circus. There you will stop and leave us! What is to follow is my look out!"

And with an inimitable gesture of triumph, the designator sent off his vespillos. They withdrew, convinced that their master had an appointment for the next evening with some high-born matron, whose imprudence must remain shrouded in mystery.

From that time until the hour of departure, Gurges remained invisible, in his private room, busy with preparations which none could have suspected.

But whilst so many persons are working for the safety of the Grand-Vestal, let us see what had taken place in Rome on that day, and what had become of Cornelia since she had fallen into the hands of the pontiffs.

CHAPTER XX.

THE EXECUTION.

THE news of the Grand-Vestal's sentence had spread in Rome, early in the morning, with that swiftness peculiar to certain events which strike the multitude with terror. Instantly, the immense city had been shrouded in gloom. The Courts were suspended, and the magistrates ceased their functions; the citizens left their occupations and closed the doors of their houses; everywhere, in the place of motion and the joys of life, appeared the image of desolation and death.

The Forum was silent!

Not that it was deserted, but the immense crowd which filled it was awe-struck with the solemnity of the occasion, and the voices anon so loud and noisy, now scarcely rose above a whisper. It was particularly in this usually lively centre of Roman life, that the solemn, gloomy and imposing picture of public consternation was more apparent.

In the midst of this sinister calmness, might be discerned a secret impatience to see the moment arrive when the sufferings of the victims would commence in the various phases of this atonement. In every time and every place, the multitude evinces the same cruel instincts.

The spectacle which was to gratify the morbid curiosity of the Romans, was divided into three distinct parts; The flagellation of the virgin condemned for incest; the execution of her seducer, in the centre of the Forum; the march of the funeral procession which would cross the city to conduct the Vestal to the *Campus Sceleratus*.

Ancient usage, a last feeling of respect for public modesty, prohibited the multitude from assisting at the first tortures of the unfortunate who must only descend into the tomb when her flesh shall have been torn and bruised by the bloody lash of the pontiffs.

Cornelia had suffered this painful ordeal. After being torn from the arms of Aurelia and Cecilia, she was led to a retired and dark room in the *Atrium Regium*, despoiled of her costume of priestess, and cruelly whipped by the unfeel-

ing pontiffs.* They stopped only when her strength failed and she could bear no more.

They then decorated the victim. Funeral emblems were substituted for the virginal ornaments of the priestess; and she was left alone and in the dark, to wait until the hour when she would enter the litter which would carry her to the grave.

Meanwhile, a commotion has taken place in the Forum. The ranks of the silent multitude have opened to let pass a party of men—Ravinus and his aids—bearing a wooden gallows made in the shape of a fork. Above the fork is a scroll upon which is written in large black letters:

"METELLUS CELER, KNIGHT, CORRUPTER OF THE GRAND-VESTAL CORNELIA."

Which meant that the unfortunate young man would be torn with leaden-pointed whips until death would ensue; for such was the fate awarded to the seducers of Vestals.

Another undulation of the crowd showed that the victim was approaching. A litter, hermetically closed, was seen to leave the Comitium; it was carried slowly across the Forum, and stopped at the foot of the gallows. A young man stepped out; his face was pale with suffering and the certainty of death; but so handsome, so noble, and disdainful withal, that the people moved with pity and a sympathetic admiration, uttered one of those exclamations which console suffering innocence while they make its oppressors tremble.

This young man was Metellus Celer, who, brought to Rome by the agents of Marcus Regulus, had learned, but a few hours since, that he was sentenced to death. The unfortunate young patrician cast around him a look in which could be read not the desire to solicit mercy, but a sombre indignation.

"Romans!" he cried, upon perceiving the scroll attached to the gallows, "remember that this inscription is a falsehood! . . . The Grand-Vestal has never transgressed her duty . . . and I die innocent!"

* Nuda, quidem, sed obscuro loco, aut velo, medio interposito flagris Cædebatur. Titus-Livius, Lib. xxviii., Cap. 11, Valer-Max. Lib. 1, No. 16; Plut, *Numa*, p. 67.

But the crowd, but now moved with compassion, remained stolid and silent, wrapt in the cruel expectation of the spectacle which was to follow. Ravinus laid his heavy hand on Metellus Celer, and commenced to strip him of his garments. In a moment the wretched young man was bound to the forked gallows, in such a way as would facilitate the execution. Then, Ravinus commenced to strike slowly, for the flagellation must continue until the lettica bearing the Grand-Vestal will pass near the Comitium, in order that the priestess may hear the agonizing shrieks and last groans of her alleged accomplice!

But Metellus Celer's constancy defies the horrible pain caused by the leaden balls which bruise his flesh at every blow of the whip. The words which escape his lips from time to time, are not words of supplication, but of indignant protest.

"What have I done?" he exclaims in a voice which grows fainter, "what have I done? . . I have done nothing! . . ."

They could wrench no other cry from him, says Pliny-the-Younger, from whom we have borrowed the principal details of the double execution of Metellus Celer and Cornelia, which he has narrated with all the indignation of an honest soul.*

Whilst the multitude witnessed, with varied emotions, this slow and cruel agony, a silent cortege left the *Atrium Regium* and wended its way through the Forum, by the *Vicus Tuscus*. The sacerdotal college, formed in two ranks, escorted the Emperor wearing the costume of the High Pontiff, and walking behind a funeral lettica carried by eight slaves.

This litter, taken forcibly from Gurges, had been securely closed on every side with cushions fastened by leather thongs, so as not only to conceal the victim from sight, but to smother the sound of her cries of despair. For it was feared that the sight of this beautiful virgin, condemned to the most horrible death, might awaken a dangerous compassion, and that her groans might find an echo in pitying hearts.

As the gloomy procession advanced, the people gave way, then closed their ranks, and formed in its rear, to follow it

* Pliny-the-Younger, Lib. iv., Epist 11.

to the *Campus Sceleratus*, where they would feast their eyes upon the last act of this dreadful drama. Not a voice broke the stillness of the atmosphere, which hung upon the great human crowd with the heaviness that indicates the approaching storm.

Ravinus multiplies his blows. Metellus Celer, who still breathes, although his body is but one bruised, bleeding mass, must expire now, so that the executioner may join the passing cortege, and be ready to perform the important duties assigned to him by the sacred rites and ancient usages. It is he who, after the last invocation by the High Pontiff, will lower the Grand-Vestal into the abyss, and seal the stone which will shut her off forever from the world. He roars with impatience; the bloody whip cuts deeper into the flesh to seek a last remnant of vitality!

Metellus Celer seemed to revive under this new torment; casting a languid look around him, he perceived the fatal litter! Cornelia was there, about to die also, and he would see her no more! This cruel sight completed the work which torture had prolonged. The unfortunate man's body was convulsed by a desperate effort which shook the gallows; a piercing shriek, the last, supreme cry of a despair too horrible to be borne, rent the air. Then, the rigid limbs became unbent, the head fell on the breast—Metellus Celer was dead.

Did this last fearful cry reach the ears of the unfortunate Vestal? . . Who knows? But the lettica trembled on the shoulders of its bearers, and notwithstanding the cushions that muffled the sound, a groan, full of anguish, mingled with the last sigh of Cornelia's dying lover.

Metellus Celer was spared another cruel pang. If death had not veiled his eyes and deprived him of hearing, he would have seen Marcus Regulus, who walked near the litter, pause as he passed near him, and would have heard the vile informer address him this ironical remark:

"Well, Metellus, I told you so once; take care the third time I shall find you on my way. . . This is no longer the day when Parmenon fell under your sword."

But these words were addressed to a corpse, and Marcus Regulus turned away with the shame of his useless outrage.

The litter stopped near the mouth of the shaft from which

protruded the end of a ladder. Everything in the vault had been prepared in accordance with the ancient rites: the funeral bed was made, the bread, the water and the milk, last food of the victim, were placed near the couch, and a small lamp threw a dim light on these objects, leaving all around wrapt in darkness. Amidst the general silence, the slaves opened the litter, and the Grand-Vestal stepped forth.

At the sight of this majestic virgin, scarcely able to stand up, the crowd could not restrain an exclamation of horror. Cornelia's form was almost entirely concealed under the folds of a long black veil, her pale features being alone visible. But the involuntary weakness of the woman succumbing to physical suffering, was of short duration. Her eyes flash with scorn and pride as they rest on Domitian. As the High Pontiff, it will be his duty to place his hand upon her, and consign her to the infernal gods. But he seems to hesitate; he dares not look at the victim he has condemned without a hearing.

"What stops you, Cæsar, and why not consummate your work?" cried Cornelia, in a voice so ringing and clear, that all heard it. "If I am guilty and incestuous, what is it that you wait for, to hurl me into the abyss?"

The Emperor, angered and troubled by these scornful words, advanced hastily towards the Grand Vestal, and raising his hands to heaven, recited in a low voice the secret prayers consecrated by the religious rites for this fearful atonement.

Cornelia listened attentively.

"Cæsar," she said, when the Emperor had finished his invocation, "you ask of the gods not to punish Rome for my crime. . . And I have prayed a God more powerful than those you invoke, not to visit upon the Roman people the injustice of my sentence. May you, Cæsar, feel one day remorse and repentance for having ordered my execution. . ."

And turning to the people:

"Romans," she cried in a loud voice, "I die innocent of all crime! . . The purity of this body which is about to perish, was never sullied. . . Priestess of Vesta . . I shall descend into my tomb with the virginity of my youth. Remember my last words. . ."

She held out her hand to the Emperor.

"Cæsar," she said, "guide me."

According to the rites, it was the duty of the High Pontiff to place the Vestal on the first steps of the ladder, after which he withdrew with the pontifical college, leaving to the executioner the care of leading the victim to the bottom of the shaft, and installing her in the vault. Domitian fulfilled this duty hastily, and fled, followed by the pontiffs, who hastened away like guilty wretches from a spectacle which inspired them with remorse and shame.

Cornelia tarried awhile, standing alone on the first step of the ladder. Remembering the promise of the Christian priest, she scanned the sea of faces around her, to detect a sign, a motion which would bid her hope. But she saw nothing but the pitiless curiosity of a crowd anxious to enjoy a promised spectacle. She had nothing to hope from man.

Her eyes, filled with an expression of supreme anguish, then turned slowly towards heaven. Was it a reproach addressed to that God whom she had implored, and who remained mute like the others? Was it a last prayer to beseech him again to manifest His power?

When she looked down, she saw only Ravinus, who, smiling horribly, offered her his hand. She rejected it with disgust, and began the descent unaided. But at the first steps, her stole got caught around the end of the ladder. She turned quickly, with a gesture of alarmed modesty, and released it.*

Then she soon disappeared into the vault. . .

Ravinus pulled up the ladder. The slab was placed over the opening. Then, Ravinus and his aids began to throw earth into the mouth of the shaft so as to conceal the slab. Soon, every vestige of the opening had disappeared, and the ground was levelled at a great distance, so that not even the spot could be recognized where the incestuous priestess was entombed, separated from the living and the dead.

And all was over.

*Pliny, Lib. iv., Epist. 11.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DELIVERANCE.

IF, some thirty hours after the consummation of this fearful atonement, a citizen should have ventured, notwithstanding the darkness, in this deserted section of Rome, he would have noticed, with surprise, four slaves bearing a litter, and who silent and motionless like so many shadows, waited patiently under the solitary porticoes of the temple of Safety.

Then, if this belated citizen, inclining a little to the right, had ascended by the way of the *Agger* of Servius as far as the Collina Gate, he would have discovered by the pale light of the stars, an old man kneeling on a slight mound in the barren plain and praying with fervor.

Now, at the very time we speak of, an individual was precisely accomplishing this nocturnal excursion; walking with noiseless step, peering carefully into every dark recess and corner, and stopping, from time to time, to listen anxiously to the slightest noise. These extraordinary precautions were justified by the very singular appearance of this night prowler, which would have certainly excited the suspicions of the capital triumvir if he had suddenly came upon him.

The mysterious wayfarer carried a rope ladder rolled around his body, a spade in one hand, and an iron crow-bar in the other. He was, moreover, provided with a dark-lantern. The chief of the urban police would have doubtless asked our friend Gurges—the reader has already recognized him—what use he intended to make of these suspicious instruments, and whether he was not undertaking one of his old expeditions and preparing to desecrate the grave and rob the dead for the benefit of his friend the tonsor.

Gurges was making all haste to join Clemens in the *Campus Sceleratus*, but he had to use a great deal of caution to avoid dangerous meetings on the way. At last, he reached the further end of the *Vicus Cyprius*, and before ascending the Quirinal, he paused in the shadow of the temple of Fortune, and peered through the gloom at the porticoes of the temple of Safety, close by, to ascertain whether his vespillos had carried out his instructions.

"Very well!" he muttered, as he discovered the lectica and its motionless bearers. "All is well. Those vespillos have understood me . . . By Venus Libitina! . . . I can laugh now at the capital triumvir and his men . . . "

But Gurges had scarcely muttered those defiant words, when he threw himself down flat on the pavement of the temple of Fortune, exclaiming:

"Hateful triumvir! . . . Unfortunate Vestal! . . . "

The regular tramp of a patrol could be heard in the distance, coming up the *Vicus Cyprius*. If Gurges had had the good luck of preceding the cohort, the cohort would now have the advantage of pouncing upon Gurges

Still, things might take a different course. The patrol might pass straight on without discovering the designator, but then they would necessarily come upon the vespillos and their suspicious lectica. Or they might turn to the right, but in this case they would surprise the pontiff of the Christians in the *Campus Sceleratus*.

The dilemna had three horns, and all equally dangerous! Hence the designator's exclamation and the curse he addressed the triumvir.

There was, however, still a chance of safety

About a hundred steps from Fortune's temple, there was to the left, a narrow lane which led to Cæsar's Forum and finally to the Catularia Gate, after passing near the *atrium* of Freedom. If the patrol followed this lane there would be nothing to fear, for it would lead them to distant quarters of the city, whence they would not be likely to return in this direction. The question was would they take the lane? meanwhile they advanced with their torches whose light caused Gurges no little perturbation

Another cry of alarm was very near escaping his lips when he recognized the voice of his personal enemy, the capital triumvir, ordering his men to ascend the Quirinal, near whose base was situated the *Agger* of Servius, whence it was an easy matter to survey the *Campus Sceleratus*. But to the designator's great astonishment, the patrol stopped and refused to proceed further. The triumvir, surprised at this unusual resistance, repeated his order.

"Are you not aware," remonstrated some voices, "that this spot is cursed . . and if we were to advance we should

see the shade of the Grand-Vestal hovering near her grave! . . . And such a sight announces death within the year to the beholder!"

"That is a fact," said the triumvir, not less superstitious than his men. "I had forgotten that execution . . . Let us get away from here . . . "

And the officer countermarched his little troop who turned into the narrow lane.

When the noise of their steps had died away, Gurges sprang to his feet.

"By Venus Libitina," he cried, "what cowards those fellows are! . . . Who ever knew the dead to come back? . . . I have never seen any, and many a night I have passed amidst the tombs! . . . I mean the veritable dead . . . for as to the Grand-Vestal, I hope and trust she is still alive . . and that I, Gurges, will soon take her out of her vault! . . Never mind, those worthy patrol-men have given me a terrible scare! . . . But the pontiff of the Christians will be thinking that I have broken my word to him, and I would not have him think this for anything in the world! . . Let us make haste then, I shall explain to him what caused my delay . . Good luck, my dear triumvir! . . it is probable we shall not meet again this night."

Collecting his various instruments, Gurges ascended the Quirinal as promptly as he could, embarrassed as he was with his load. A few minutes later he was near Clemens and apologized to him by telling his adventure with the triumvir.

"You see it, my son," said the priest with a quiet smile. "God watches over us; he proves it by turning off these first dangers . . It will, perhaps, not be the last mark of assistance He will give us. But what are you doing, Gurges?"

The designator, after striking the soil several times with his crowbar, had thrown himself on the ground and was listening anxiously.

"What are you doing, Gurges?" the pontiff repeated, no answer having been made to his first question

Gurges raised himself on his knees and looked at Clemens with an air of anguish.

"This is singular!" he remarked. "I have made this noise to warn the Grand-Vestal that we are here, . . . and I hear nothing, absolutely nothing! . . . Not a cry, not a

movement! . . . Has she then already succumbed? . . . Oh! . . . "

And Gurges laying hold of his spade began to dig with an ardor that amounted almost to rage.

Clemens said nothing. It was well that the weakness of man should show itself before the greatness of God.

Three men had been employed piling up earth into the shaft; then they had trodden upon upon it and made it so compact and firm that Gurges soon found himself struggling against an almost inseparable obstacle. It had been easy work at first, but when he stood up to his waist in this narrow aperture, hemmed in between four thick walls, he saw that it would be impossible for him to finish his task unaided. Every shoveful of earth that he threw out would crumble in again carrying with it the rubbish previously shovelled out, and which, falling upon him, made his work still more difficult.

The poor fellow persisted manfully but his efforts were unavailing, and once, being nearly covered up by the crumbling sand, he uttered an exclamation of despair. But another voice replied to his cry of anguish, and Gurges looking up saw Clemens standing in a halo of light, with his hands extended over the chasm!

Then, Gurges felt that the ground upon which he stood was sinking rapidly, and he rolled suddenly into the open vault. When he rose to his feet, Clemens was standing by his side. No other light could be seen but the small funeral lamp still burning near the bed. By this flickering flame they saw the Grand-Vestal stretched motionless on her couch.

Gurges laid a trembling hand upon the rigid form, and fell, sobbing, at the pontiff's feet.

"O my lord," he exclaimed, "she is dead! her body is icy cold!"

Clemens smiled as he looked at this poor man whose heart would not yet open to confidence, and said to him kindly:

"What my son, after what you have seen, do you still doubt?"

Gurges then saw that the old man held in his hands a vase and some bread.

"My son," added the pontiff, "the work of God is accomplished! . . The work of man must now commence." . .

* * * * * * * *

When Cornelia descended into the vault, she placed herself on the bed, in the attitude of one who has lost even the power of thinking. She did not weep but the fictitious strength which had sustained her during the execution, had completely vanished. She was in that state of stupor which causes a void in the mind and plunges the body into a rigid inertness.

Her eyes followed vacantly the motion of the earth shovelled at the entrance of the vault by Ravinus and his aids, and part of which, sliding into the vault, rolled to her feet and gradually covered them. This sand which moved as it spread into the vault, the noise made by the workmen above, all these fearful preparatives were life still, and the Grand-Vestal clung to them as to a last hope.

Then all was hushed, and all motion ceased.

Cornelia gazed slowly around her, with eyes distended by terror . . . She saw the bread, water, and milk, placed near the lamp. She remained thoughtful a long time, contemplating this food by which her remaining days were measured. Then, concluding doubtless, that all hope had vanished and it was better not to prolong sufferings which must end in death, she took the bowl of milk, brought it to her lips and poured the remainder of the contents on the ground. With a bitter smile she now took up the piece of bread, felt its weight, and breaking it into crumbs cast them about and trampled upon them.

The water she preserved. Was it from some secret hope? The sacrifice was consummated, life was no longer possible. Death could come now, and the Grand-Vestal lay on her couch, to await its coming.

We shall not describe the mental tortures of this unfortunate young woman, the cruel sufferings caused by the want of air, or the first pangs of that terrible disease—hunger. When Gurges found her rigid and cold as a corpse, she had fainted, exhausted by thirty hours of want and terror.

* * * * * * * *

Finding Cornelia inanimate, Clemens raised her head, and poured drop by drop between her lips the cordial he had brought with him. A slight tremor of the rigid limbs soon proved to Gurges that the Grand-Vestal still lived and would not be long recovering her senses.

Clemens again opened Cornelia's lips and repeated the dose at short intervals until the small amphora he had brought was emptied of its contents. Life was returning, but the exhausted girl was still unconscious. After a little while the good priest took a small loaf of bread made from the whitest flour kneaded in pure milk, and placing it between the Vestal's fingers, lifted her hand near to her face. By an instinctive motion, the Grand-Vestal brought the savory food to her mouth and ate it greedily. Still, she spoke not. So completely exhausted had been the victim, that her faculties could only be gradually restored.

Clemens waited, kneeling near the bed. Gurges, overcome by emotion and admiration, seemed plunged in a sort of dreamy stupor. His face was bathed with tears.

A deep sigh announced at last that the resurrection was complete. Cornelia raised herself on her elbow, and passing her hand on her forehead as if she awoke from a dream, exclaimed:

"Where am I?"

But she fell back with another cry—a cry of terror and fearful despair! By the dim light of the lamp she had recognized the vault in which she had been left to die!

"You are saved! madam," said Clemens in a grave and calm voice, and he touched her hand.

"Who are you?" asked the Grand-Vestal with astonishment, for she could not see the features of the speaker. "How did you gain access to this tomb?"

"Madam, have you forgotten the man who promised to rescue you even from the bowels of the earth . . . if you were ever made to descend into this abyss? . . . I have come to fulfil my promise! . . ."

"The pontiff of the Christians!" exclaimed Cornelia, "ah!"

She sprang from her couch and fell at the feet of her preserver, holding them tightly clasped and bathing them with her tears. So great was her gratitude, so overpowering her emotion that she could not speak. Nothing was heard in this narrow space but the convulsive sobs of the poor woman miraculously restored to life.

"Madam," said Clemens, as he endeavored to raise her trembling form. "You are saved! But you must now

hasten to leave this dismal abode. A devoted man will take you to a place of concealment where your persecutors cannot reach you."

And turning to Gurges:

"My son," he added, "prepare your ladder! . . Your prudent forethought has been wise! . . You may now finish the work of God."

The rope-ladder having been made fast to a projecting stone on the crest of the wall, the pontiff placed the other end in the Grand-Vestal's hand.

"Come, madam," he said, trying to release his knees from her embrace. "It is getting late and day-light must not find us here! . . . Hasten, I pray you!"

Cornelia rose to her feet, but instead of taking the rope she let it drop. Going to the further end of the vault she took the small pitcher of water she had preserved, and bringing it to the priest, she again knelt before him:

"Father," she murmured faintly and in a beseeching tone, "Metellus Celer is no more! . . I heard his last cry! . . . All the affections of my heart are dead, and of the Vestal there remains only the virgin saved by you! . . Your God is mine! . . . It is by water that one becomes a Christian, and I have kept the water given to allay the dying thirst of the victim, in that hope; for as I was about to spill it I remembered that you might come! . . Before you return me to the world of the living, make me a Christian, so that I shall be henceforth only your daughter!"

Tears of happiness suffused the eyes of the venerable pontiff and rolled slowly over his cheeks.

"My daughter," he said, with deep emotion, "take off that veil and bow your head . . . Ordinarily the holy baptism is given only after a long period of preparation and probation . . . But you have already been instructed in our holy doctrine . . . and then, who could add anything to the solemn teaching of this tomb from which God alone, and not I, has delivered you? . . . Recollect yourself, my daughter, and pray to Him who, at my voice, will make you his child."

Then Clemens laid his hands on the head of the recollected virgin, and marked her forehead with the sign of the cross. This preliminary ceremony made her a catechumen. Then taking the water, which he blessed, he proceeded:

"Cornelia," he said, "I baptize thee in the name of God the Father . . "

Here he sprinkled her with the holy water.

"I baptize thee in the name of Jesus Christ His Son."

And he again poured water on her head.

"I baptize thee in the name of the Holy Ghost."

And what remained of water was again poured on the pure brow of the kneeling virgin. After a last invocation in which he united the three persons of the Holy Trinity, he blessed Cornelia, saying:

"Rise, my daughter, thou art a Christian! . . a Christian in life! . . a Christian in eternity! . . "

A few moments later, Cornelia stepped out of the pit, supported by the holy pontiff. Gurges followed. As soon as he came out, the dreary chasm was suddenly filled up, and Ravinus himself, if he had seen fit to visit the spot on the next day, would have never suspected that any strange hand had disturbed his work.

"My daughter," said the pontiff, I must go to my brethren . . But, after God, here is the man who saved you! . . I confide you to his care. Follow him! . . "

Cornelia took the designator's hand in hers and pressed it affectionately. Gurges came near fainting.

"Father," he cried, throwing himself at the pontiff's feet, "I also want to be a Christian!"

"I receive you, my son, and it is not the least joy that God gives me! . . But for the present we must part! . . . We shall meet again soon and the holy water will flow also on your head."

The holy old man taking the staff upon which he usually leaned was soon lost in the gloom.

Gurges had the happiness of supporting Cornelia's feeble steps as far as the temple of Safety, where he found the litter and his blindfolded vespillos. Everything passed off in accordance with the programme announced. The vespillos reached the little isolated house, without accident and departed according to their master's previous order, fully convinced that they had left this worthy with his lady love.

When Cornelia stepped out of the litter she could not restrain a cry of joy. She was received in the arms of Aurelia and Cecilia. This great joy was due to the delicate attention

of Gurges who thought that the Grand Vestal would feel more safe if, coming out of the tomb, she found herself surrounded by the beings dearest to her heart.

A short time after these events happened, the sentence of banishment pronounced against Flavia Domitilla was carried into effect. Domitian ordered her to repair to the island of Pontia which would be thereafter her residence.

On the night preceding her departure, the crypt in which the Christians celebrated their mysteries was brilliantly illuminated for a double and imposing ceremony. The divine Aurelia, the betrothed of the Cæsar Vespasian, and Gurges, the humble designator of funerals, knelt side by side to receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

Afterwards the venerable pontiff consecrated to God three virgins who received from his hands the first veil worn by the brides of Christ.

These three women were: Flavia Domitilla, grand-niece of the Emperor Domitian; Euphrosine, a waiting maid of that pious matron; and Theodora. Under this last name was concealed Cornelia, the Grand-Vestal, who consecrated the remainder of her life to the service of that God who had made a miracle to save her from a horrible death. She accompanied Flavia Domitilla, and shared voluntarily her exile, her long sufferings and her death.

CHAPTER XXII.

GURGES TREATS OF THE EMPIRE.

ON the eighth day before the ides of September, (6th of September, A. D., 96,) as the shadows of night commenced to invade the streets of Rome, two men could have been seen walking hurriedly in the Suburana Way. They came from different directions, one looking modestly on the ground and absorbed in thought; the other casting anxious glances on the houses as if he were seeking to recognize some particular one. As neither of them looked before him, it naturally happened that they ran against each other.

"Ah!" cried one of the two men.

"Oh!" exclaimed the other simultaneously.

For in every language, these two little words "Ah!" and "Oh!" are used to express sudden admiration or astonishment.

"Blockhead!" added the house-seeker, which showed that his "oh!" was not intended as a mark of admiration.

"What shall I call you?" replied gently and almost laughingly the other; "neither of us paid any attention to what was in his way. That is all!"

"Hallo! . . it is Gurges," exclaimed the former speaker, casting a single glance on the designator. "Ah! this is a lucky meeting! . . I intended to see you in a few days, to speak to you about some important matters, in which you may be very useful."

Gurges was surprised to hear himself called by name by this stranger. Still, upon studying his features more closely, it seemed to him that this was not the first time he had met the man. He looked at him, trying to remember when and where they had met. Light dawned at last, which the designator expressed by another "ah!"

"Ah! You recognize me, do you?" said the stranger.

"You are the man," replied Gurges firmly, "who, two years ago, came to my house one night, and brought me a certain letter . . "

"That's it," said the stranger, "was it then a bad office? And did it not result in your being able to save the Grand-Vestal?"

"Silence!" muttered Gurges.

"Very well," replied the unknown, "we shall drop this subject if you wish . . But I wish to speak to you . . Let us go in there . . "

And he pointed to a tavern near by through whose door, left ajar to attract customers, streamed a ray of light.

"Let us go in," said Gurges who, naturally, was curious to know who this mysterious individual might be who was mingled with one of the most important circumstances of his life. "Let us go in; I am somewhat in a hurry, but I shall make greater diligence in what I have to do, and it will amount to the same thing."

The stranger, preceding the former designator of pagan ceremonies—Gurges had resigned this important office in consequence of his conversion to the Christian faith—entered the tavern and asked for a private room. He also ordered some food and wine, which he offered to Gurges to share with him. But the latter declined, with thanks.

"My dear Gurges," the stranger began, "in order to give you confidence, shall I tell you where you come from and where you are going? For, although I was slightly astonished to meet you on my way, I soon recollected that you must have been in this neighborhood, at the time we met."

"Speak," said Gurges, still retaining a ceremonious tone, although his companion treated him familiarly. "Speak, I listen to you."

"Well, my dear Gurges, you have been washing the body of that Nicomedus who was beaten to death yesterday, near Minerva's temple because he refused to sacrifice to the gods. And you are now going to the Capena-Gate, to tell the Christians they may come for the body of him they will call a martyr, to give him burial . . . Shall I add, dear Gurges," continued the unknown, "that you will go a little out of your way, to call at the house of the divine Aurelia, who expects you, and who will watch near the dead body until *her brethren*"—there was irony and contempt in his voice as he spoke these words—"will present themselves this very night to carry it to the crypt where you have your tombs! . . . And now, my dear Gurges, tell me, am I well informed."

It was at the time of the second persecution, and any Christian, however strong his faith, might well shudder on hear-

ing such precise revelations concerning his secret acts. Gurges was astonished, but showed no fear.

"It is true," he said, "I have been doing what the holy priest Nicomedus himself used to do—taking away the body of a martyr from the hands of his murderers . . I expect to be killed also, beaten like him with clubs or in some other manner. If you mean to say that I have been discovered and my life is threatened like so many others, you do not terrify me, but fill me with joy!"

"Are you mad, my dear Gurges," the unknown asked compassionately, "to stake your life in this way for vain chimeras which are certainly not worth the trouble? Is it not enough that you have sacrificed your office and your fortune for this superstition? . . After all it is your own business, not mine . . But do not think that I am one of those vile informers who betray the Christians to their enemies . . . By all the gods! that trade does not suit the man who stands before you! Do you hear, Gurges?"

"I am far from suspecting you," the ex-designator hastened to remark. "I . . "

"Very well! . . very well! . . " said the stranger, interrupting him. "But let us return to the subject, time is precious . . We were saying, then, that thanks to the letter I brought you, you saved the Grand-Vestal."

"Silence!" repeated Gurges. "You must be aware of the misfortunes . . . "

"Oh!" cried his companion, again interrupting him, "you allude to the search made and the prosecutions ordered to discover an accomplice . . . It's an old story, my dear Gurges, and Domitian thinks no more about it . . Besides, it is three days since the Grand-Vestal ceased to exist! . . "

"How is this?" cried Gurges, springing to his feet from astonishment. "How can you know . . ?"

"Yesterday," replied the mysterious stranger, "a messenger brought the positive news that Flavia Domitilla, Euphrosine, and Theodora have found their death in Terracina."

"Oh!" exclaimed Gurges sorrowfully. "What! Flavia Domitilla also! . . But you said at Terracina? The island of Pontia was the place of banishment of those three Christians . . You have been deceived!"

"My dear Gurges," replied the other, "have you never

heard that Domitian, when he wishes to destroy people, and is withheld from doing so openly on account of their name or influence, or from some other motive, draws them to some place where everything has been prepared for their 'accidental' death? This is what has happened. Flavia Domitilla and her companions were suddenly transferred to Terracina upon the pretext of softening the rigor of their exile. But on the very night after their arrival, the house in which they had found shelter was destroyed by fire, and good care was taken that they should not escape."

"Another sorrow for the divine Aurelia and her noble relatives! Another triumph for the religion of Christ!" exclaimed Gurges, with that accent peculiar to times of persecution, in which bitterness and sorrow were blended with faith and enthusiasm. "Yes, for the religion of Christ! for those illustrious virgins have suffered martyrdom!"

"It was martyrdom, or at least what you call by that name," replied the stranger. "It is said, in fact, that Flavia Domitilla and her companions showed publicly their contempt for the gods and refused to offer them incense. So did Nereus and Achilleus, Flavia Domitilla's eunuchs, who were beheaded in Terracina on the very day their mistress died."

"Glory be to God!" said Gurges, making the sign of the cross. "Glory be to His martyrs. But," he resumed, "how could you learn these particulars which are not yet known in Rome? . . How could you see this courier who must have been secretly sent to the Emperor?"

"This, my dear Gurges, is what I cannot tell and you will not know. Let it suffice that you may be sure I do not deceive you in this circumstance any more than I deceived you in the Grand-Vestal's case. But," added this mysterious man, "we have now reached the important point of this conversation. Let us recapitulate: Domitian has already put to death on account of Christianity, Flavius Clemens and Flavia Domitilla, besides many who were not his kindred. What members of the imperial family remain that have been spared by his cruelty?"

And as Gurges made no reply:

"There remain," proceeded the stranger, "the divine Aurelia, the two young Cæsars, Vespasian and Domitian, and finally Flavia Domitilla, the widow of Flavius Clemens, ban-

ished, after the latter's death, to the island of Pandataria. Now, all these are Christians and may be threatened at any time."

"Aurelia," remarked Gurges, "has already appeared before the city prefect, who charged her to give up Christianity . . From that time she has practiced it openly, in the face of the Roman people, by taking care of the poor, assisting the confessors of the faith, and helping to bury the martyrs . . I believe Domitian will never dare to attempt anything against her or the young Cæsars."

"I believe the reverse, my dear Gurges, and my mission is to give you warning, you who have credit and influence with these illustrious persons . . You can affirm most positively to them, that Domitian has resolved to punish their boldness, and no consideration of family ties will stop him . . . Yourself, my dear Gurges, are threatened with an early prosecution . . and at this very time I would not give four sestertii for your life."

"So much the better," remarked Gurges with a calmness that won his companion's admiration. "I have told you that I aspire only to the glory of my brethren who have died for the name of Christ . . Aurelia and the young Cæsars entertain the same sentiment. The news you have brought will fill three hearts with joy! . . "

"Then, my dear Gurges, those who despise life so much, must also despise the empire?"

"Oh! the empire," replied the ex-designator, with supreme contempt, "the empire! this great hope has been given up long ago!"

"It is then useless for me to say that this hope might be renewed . . . I know what I am saying, Gurges," continued in a solemn tone the stranger, who had paused to observe the effect produced by his words on the companion whose secret thoughts he would have fain read. "Yes, as humble as I may appear . . it may be in my power to return to the divine Aurelia and the two young Cæsars what they have lost."

"Can it be a crime you have come to propose to me!" cried Gurges, getting up with great indignation. "For the Emperor is still young enough to reign many years, and unless he should be overthrown . . !"

"Gurges! Gurges!" exclaimed the unknown who felt

a guilty confusion at the indignant apostrophe of the Christian, faithful even to the tyrant who threatened his life; "do not give more meaning to my words than they should have . . Sit down . . and listen to what I have to say . . You will see that my propositions have nothing in them that is not perfectly legitimate."

At the same time he pulled Gurges by his tunic with such force, that the ex-designator fell back upon his seat.

"Do you know, Gurges," resumed the unknown, "that for the last eight months . . since the death of the consul Fabius Clemens, Rome and Domitian himself are kept in a state of continual alarm by the strangest omens which—singular to relate! combine to announce that the Emperor will soon disappear, either by his dying or in some other way. Don't you know that quite recently, a crow—the bird of bad omen—lit on the Tarpeian rock and spoke, as clearly as any human voice, these words in the Greek language: *All things shall go well* . . What can this mean but that the Emperor will be hurled from the throne, by the hand of the gods, no doubt? . . For, can it be supposed that with Domitian, a man who has committed so many crimes, Rome can know better days? . . Moreover, the tyrant has found the interpretation of the omen completed in a dream . . and he is himself convinced that his end is near! Well, Gurges, if such should be the will of the gods, why should it not be permitted to endeavor to secure the empire for the grand-sons of Vespasian, the nephews of Titus? for those whom the people love both for their origin and their own personal worth? . . . Now, I repeat it, I am perhaps the man who can best remove obstacles, fix the choice of the pretorians, and conquer the suffrages of the people . . but to effect this . . "

"The Cæsars should renounce Christianity?" asked Gurges.

"Doubtless! it is a matter of necessity. Rome would not consent to be ruled by princes imbued with this superstition."

"Let us stop here," exclaimed Gurges, rising. "I would never have thought that in my humble condition, the friendship with which the two Cæsars honor me, could inspire the idea that I, the former Vespillo, could be a useful intermediary, and treat in some sort, of the empire. But this very

friendship authorizes me to proclaim loudly in the name of the two Cæsars Vespasian and Domitianus that they have renounced the empire as easily as I, Gurges, renounced the worship of Venus Libitina, and abdicated the title of designator of funeral ceremonies."

"But what kind of men are you?" cried the stranger, "that neither death nor the certainty of matchless rank and power can elicit from you anything but contempt and disdain?"

"Oh!" said Gurges, "we are men who are sustained and animated by the hope of an eternal bliss to be reached through death. . . This is why we look with pity on life and all its joys, even to the highest!"

"But tell me, my dear Gurges, how did you conceive this hope of which you speak? . . . What made you become a Christian, you the wealthy designator . . you the supreme chief of Venus Libitina's agents?"

"It was a miracle," replied Gurges, "a miracle which passed my understanding. . . You said just now that it was I saved the Grand-Vestal! No! it was the God of the Christians!"

"A miracle, Gurges! . . What, you are a Christian because you have seen what you call a miracle? . . But there is a man in Rome who has been performing miracles long since!"

"You mean Apollonius of Thyana, do you not?"

"The same! . . In Nero's time did he not recall to life a young girl they were carrying to the grave? And quite recently, in presence of Domitian who was questioning him, did he not disappear suddenly from the crowded room to go to Pozzuola, where his disciple, Damis, affirms that he saw him at the very hour he should have still been in Rome?"

"Well," inquired Gurges, "if Apollonious of Thyana has performed those two miracles, why is it that you do not believe in him, although he styles himself a god? . . Why is he mocked and laughed at publicly in Rome?"

"What is the nature of those prodigies that you Christians make so much noise about, that they should be held in greater faith?"

"But," replied Gurges, "you have seen one and you may judge for yourself,"

"What do you mean?" asked the unknown.

"What!" said Gurges, "don't you remember what took place last year at the Latin Gate, and that venerable old man whom Domitian caused to be cast, alive, in boiling oil? Did you not see that apostle of Christ rejoice in the midst of this fearful ordeal, and come out unhurt? Is that miracle not great enough which was witnessed by the whole Roman people? What do you think of it?"

Gurges alluded to the glorious triumph of St John the Evangelist, which the Catholic Church celebrates on the 6th of May. But, aside of the great number of conversions brought about by this prodigy, the Emperor and the philosophers ascribed it to the power of incantations. This explains the disdainful reply made by the unknown to Gurges' question:

"Magic! my friend . . . pure witchcraft!"

"Well," said Gurges, "your Apollonius of Thyana who is said to be such a great magician, may try it . . and if he succeeds. . . But," he added, "this is enough; it is time I should return to my brethren . . the more so since I must impart to them the grave news you have told me. Anyhow, don't expect that the Cæsars Vespasian and Domitianus will change their resolution, even if you had really the power to realize your promises. . . If God wills it, the empire . . . but the empire with Christ's religion . . . or death rather than the renunciation of faith!"

And Gurges, bowing to his companion, hastened away. The unknown remained alone, absorbed in his perplexing thoughts.

"What shall we do" he soliloquized, rising from his seat; "if these two young men fail us? . . Who can we select? . . No one wishes to brave the danger! . . Nerva, it is true, is ready . . but he is but an old man! . . Shall I go to that meeting of which I received mysterious notice to-day! . . Yes! . ."

Having made up his mind, he hurried from the tavern. The night was dark, and the unknown observed carefully the door of each house, as he went on, as if he were looking for some signal. He stopped at last, muttering: "It is here!" and having examined once more to make sure it was the right place, he said a little louder:

"Brutus and Senate!"

The door was promptly and noiselessly opened.

"I am expected, am I not?" said the stranger as he glided in.

"Yes, my lord," replied a voice. And the door closed.

The new comer crossed rapidly an atrium still darker than the street, and having opened another door at the furthest end of this habitation, found himself suddenly in a dimly lighted room, where a few men were assembled, who exclaimed:

"Ah! here is Parthenius at last!"

"Parthenius, the news are serious . . we must decide how to act. . . Here! see these tablets I have taken last night from under Domitian's pillow."

The speaker was a deformed and hideous creature who had sprang forward to welcome Parthenius. In other words, it was Hirsutus, the Emperor's dwarf and most implacable enemy.

"My lords," said Parthenius, "I also have interesting news to communicate. . . . You are right; these tablets must put an end to all hesitancy. Let us deliberate."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CLOUDS GATHERING.

AURELIA, since her eyes had opened to divine truth, had been an example of what faith and grace can do when they take possession of a heart. She was not long understanding that she must renounce the empire, as her new belief would prove an insuperable barrier; and she accepted with joy this sacrifice which formerly would have seemed to her an impossibility.

Nevertheless, she had preserved her love for Vespasian, but she had sanctified this legitimate affection by showing herself ready to sacrifice it to God, if His glory required this last proof of devotion. Now, she felt that for her faith, she could not only silence the voice of her heart, but have even the strength of encouraging her cousin in his resolutions. She understood now that religion must be placed above all things human, even to the most precious and the dearest, and she frequently conversed on this subject with Cecilia, whom she called sister, and who, conforming to her desires and orders, gave her the same sweet name.

After Flavia Domitilla's departure, she had succeeded that sainted matron in the accomplishment of all the pious works of which the latter had given the first example in Rome. Like her, Aurelia could now be seen daily assisting the sick, sheltering abandoned infirm slaves, and relieving all the miseries and sorrows of poverty, She wanted to give up her immense wealth and to place it in the hands of the pontiff Clemens; but the latter had refused and had compelled her to remain its dispenser, enjoining her even to devote a sufficient portion of her income to maintain her high rank in a becoming manner.

Those distinctions, so highly prized of old, and now despised by the divine Aurelia, were a great burden to her, and she endeavored to compensate by voluntary privations and humble deeds in her private life, the enjoyment and secret vanity of the pompous exigencies to which she must submit in public. Thus, she taught, herself, her numerous slaves, many of whom she had set free, but who had remained with her; she

nursed them in their sickness and provided with solicitude for all their wants. They were frequently the auxiliaries of her charitable intentions, in which she was aided, however, principally by Cecilia and Gurges.

Such was the life of the divine Aurelia, when the persecution broke out suddenly, which Domitian determined to wage against the Jews so long designated to his vengeance.

The first persecution was due to the necessity in which Nero found himself of justifying the burning of Rome by accusing the Christians of that fearful catastrophe. But it is difficult to set forth with anything like precision, the real causes of the second persecution. Domitian, after his many crimes, covered with the blood of the most illustrious citizens, could not but feel that he had become odious to the people, and that the desire for his overthrow was not confined to the ill-fated Lucius Antonius and his unknown confederates The slaughter of all whom he believed implicated had not thrown any light upon the conspiracy. He lived in continual dread and anxiety, and took the most extraordinary precautions to guard against the fate predicted by the Chaldean philosophers,* and of the approach of which he had a presentiment.

Fearful omens were continually adding to his anxiety. He felt that he was surrounded by invisible and active enemies, even in the imperial household He relented in his acts of cruelty, hoping to pacify the public mind, but it had no effect, and the warnings of his approaching fall continued more frequent and explicit. He then gave full sway to his cruel instincts, and woe to whoever excited his suspicions! The narrative of his cruel deeds would appall the reader. and would be foreign to the plot of our story.

At last, shut up in his palace, like a wild beast in its lair, and roaring with powerless fury, he remembered the prophecy that the Jews would become masters of all things, and he persuaded himself that the danger lay with his own kindred. He resolved, therefore, notwithstanding his former fear of the powerful God of the Christians, to proceed against his relations, in whom he centered all his apprehensions ; for, if the Sibylline books promised the empire of the world to the

* Suetonius, in Domit, Cap. XIV.

people coming from Judea, that is, to the disciples of Christ, were not Flavius Clemens and his sons—Christians all—the secret choice of the people of Rome?

Such was, in our opinion, the only cause of the second persecution. Its character was more political than religious. With the exception of the martyrdom of St. John and a few other Christians, such as the holy priest, Nicomedus, whom the excited populace beat to death with clubs, it is not shown that this persecution reached any large number of the faithful. It fell almost exclusively upon the members of the Imperial family, and after the murder of his relations, Domitian countermanded the orders he had issued against the Christians.

Flavius Clemens was put to death, and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, was banished, but Domitian attempted nothing against the young Cæsars and Aurelia, notwithstanding their refusal to sacrifice to the gods when urged to do so by the city-prefect. This leniency of the tyrant cannot well be explained; it may have been owing to the strange omens which followed the death of Flavius Clemens, and which are related by Suetonius. It seemed, according to this historian, that not only mankind but the Gods had united to avenge the death of the martyr, and make Domitian tremble for his own fate.

But a tyrant like Domitian could not resign himself to lose his power and his life, without trying to exercise his vengeance to the very last hour. After the persecution of the Christians, the Emperor's suspicions turned, with more justice this time, upon other parties, many of whom in fact were conspiring against him. Dion Cassius relates that the boy of whom he had made his plaything, and who was no other than Hirsutus, found under his pillow tablets containing the names of the principal officers of his household, whom he intended to have put to death.

The name of the Empress Domitia Longina headed the list of victims.

It became urgent to act, and for this purpose the nocturnal meeting was held, in which we have left Parthenius. But if all agreed upon the necessity of action, the leaders of the conspiracy had not yet been able to agree upon the choice of the successor who should be proclaimed in Domitian's place. Parthenius belonged to the party which favored the election of

the two young Cæsars provided they renounced Christianity, and he had accepted the mission of sounding them. Hence his joy upon meeting Gurges, of whose intimacy with the young Cæsars he was aware.

Great was the disappointment of his party when Parthenius communicated the result of his interview with Gurges. A long and stormy discussion ensued, but the conspirators, knowing all the danger of further delay, finally agreed upon the choice of the Consular Nerva, a man who commanded general respect and confidence by his moderation and justice, and many other eminent virtues, but against whom militated an important objection. He was over seventy years of age, and could not live long—would they run the risk of falling after his death, under the yoke of a new tyrant?

This matter having been decided upon, one of the conspirator was instructed to proceed immediately to Tarenta, in order to advise Nerva to return secretly to Rome There remained now but to select the day upon which Domitian should be attacked, and of a common accord, they appointed the fourteenth day before the Kalends of October. This was precisely the day fixed by Domitian's presentiments.

Parthenius, who was the Emperor's chamberlain, would introduce Stephanus under the pretext of presenting a petition to Domitian; the others were to rush in if Stephanus failed to kill the tyrant outright, and help to finish him. Hirsutus would see that the Emperor would have no weapons within his reach.

These preliminaries settled, the conspirators separated after swearing to each other fidelity to the cause they had embraced.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEATH OF A TYRANT.—EPILOGUE.

THE day appointed was not distant, and the conspirators prepared their plans with the greatest prudence, taking care to avoid everything that might have raised the least suspicion.

Stephanus showed himself in public every day with his left arm in a sling as though it had met with an accident. But the cloth in which his left hand was wrapped concealed the dagger with which he was to strike the tyrant.

At last, the fatal day arrived. On the previous day, the Emperor's secret fears had increased. At supper, having ordered that a certain dish should be kept for the next day, he added: "*Provided I may eat it!*" Then he remarked that on the morrow the moon would become bloody in crossing Aquarius, and an event would occur of which the whole world would speak. During the night he sprang from his bed with cries of terror. Near morning, he sent for a German aruspice, and the latter having predicted that some great change was preparing, he had him put to death.

Sometime after this, he tried to pull out a small wart he had on his forehead. At the sight of the blood which flowed from this slight wound, he cried:

"May it please the gods that this be enough!"

He then asked what time it was, and was told the sixth hour. He became joyful and prepared to give the usual attention to his toilet, for in his presentiments the fifth hour, (ten o'clock A M.,) was the time which fate seemed to have fixed for the consummation of attempts upon his person. But at this moment Parthenius came in to tell him that a man who had important news to communicate, wished to see him without delay.

Domitian sent everybody away, and returning to his bedroom ordered the man to be brought in. It was Stephanus, with his arm in a sling. He was alone, but he had left his confederates at the door. As he entered the room he bowed profoundly to Domitian, who gazed at him with mingled suspicion and curiosity.

The conspirator saw that there was no time to lose. He

approached, and addressing the Emperor in a tone of humility, he stated that he had discovered a plot against his life, and had hastened to denounce the plotters. Saying this, he handed Domitian a long list which the latter seized hastily, and commenced to read.

The time had come. Stephanus drew himself up, and with a single glance, surveyed rapidly the whole apartment. He saw no one except Hirsutus, who was rolling on the floor, playing with a little dog, and exchanged a look of intelligence with him. Then, his eyes fixed on Domitian with evident anxiety. Did remorse stay his hand, or was he studying where to strike?

The Emperor had thrown himself upon a seat, and leaning forward with his body almost doubled up, did not raise his eyes from the pages of the voluminous document which his trembling hand turned convulsively. This position of his body was unfavorable for an attack, as it was difficult to reach a vital part, and an ill-directed blow would result in the failure of the attempt, and the probable death of the assassin, for the pretorians in one of the adjoining rooms would rush in at the first cry of the Emperor.

Stephanus gave one glance to Hirsutus, and the dwarf understood the case, and acted promptly to lessen the danger. Rolling about the room with his dog, he closed noiselessly the doors that led to the guard room. He then returned to his place behind the Emperor, and made a sign to Stephanus. The latter's right hand clutched the dagger held in his left, but he still waited for some movement of Domitian that would give the opportunity to strike.

At last the Emperor got to the end of the long list of names; and he was in the act of rising from his seat, when Stephanus springing forward, dealt him a fearful blow with his dagger. The weapon was buried to the hilt in the tyrant's abdomen, but the wound was not mortal, and with a cry of rage and pain, he sprang back and seized his sword which lay near the bed. But as he pulled it from the scabbard, the hilt only remained in his hand; the blade had been broken off. Hirsutus laughed aloud, and making a hideous face at his master, pointed to the closed doors.

The Emperor understood that he had been betrayed, and that he was lost! Then commenced a fearful struggle

between the wounded man and his assassin. They seized each other, and rolled upon the floor, Stephanus striking repeated blows; and Domitian trying to wrest the dagger from his adversary's hand and to gouge his eyes, whilst he called in vain to his pretorians.

Hirsutus hastened to open the door behind which the other conspirators waited, and the struggle was soon ended. Seven daggers buried in Domitian's breast, made him a corpse!

Meanwhile, the pretorians were bursting the other door. The assassins fled, with the exception of Stephanus, who, exhausted by the fearful struggle he had sustained, lay panting by the side of his victim. The pretorians immediately put him to death. They then hastened to scour Rome in search of a leader who could help them to avenge the master they regretted.

But they could find nothing but indifference for the fate of a tyrant, and they had to submit to Nerva's being proclaimed emperor.

The Senate assembled immediately and placed Nerva in possession of the throne. A decree was promulgated ordering the destruction of all statues and portraits of Domitian in the temples, before which the people had hitherto bent the knee as before the images of a god. His name was erased from the public monuments and triumphal inscriptions. It seemed as though they wished to annihilate even the memory of the tyrant.

The news of the murder spread into the adjacent country, and soon an aged woman was seen to enter Rome, and hasten to the Palatine-House. It was Phyllis, Domitian's old nurse, who loved with a mother's tenderness him she had held to her breast. There was no one near the gory remains except Hirsutus, who, seated upon the dead man's chest, was enjoying his long expected revenge. He fled at the sight of the weeping old nurse.

Phyllis wrapped the body in a shroud, and aided by some hired vespillos, had it carried to her little house on the Latin Way—the gift of Domitian. There, during the night, she burned it on a funeral pile. Later, when time had silenced the hatred with which the memory of the tyrant was surrounded, the faithful woman carried secretly his ashes to the temple erected to the Flavian race.

Such was the end of Domitian, one of the most odious monsters that ever dishonored mankind.

We must now say what became of the other characters which have appeared in this narrative. Aurelia and the two young Cæsars lived in peaceful obscurity, their virtues and the veneration in which the names of Vespasian and Titus were held in Rome, protected them during the fearful persecution of the Christians which happened under the Emperor Trajan. Their friendship for Olinthus, Cecilia and Gurges also preserved these young people from harm. Such at least is the natural inference we must draw from the silence of history concerning them.

Clemens, the holy pontiff, one of the most illustrious successors of the apostle, was put to death during Trajan's persecution, in the year of our Lord, 100.

Marcus Regulus did not succeed in the realization of his ambitious dreams. He lost favor under Nerva and his successor Trajan, but contented himself with enjoying in peace and retirement his immense fortune. He died of a natural death, at a very advanced age.

The reader, no doubt, will wish to know something of Eutrapeles' fate.

He was not made a senator.

Did the tonsor die of disappointment at losing the hope which had been the dream of his life?

History remains silent on this point.

It often throws a shadow upon the end of those it had surrounded with light; and avenges the brightness of their life by the obscurity of their grave.



NOTES.

(Page 8.) *Urbs.*—Ancient Rome was divided into two distinct parts; the city (*urbs*) comprised within the military enclosure constructed by Servius Tullius, and *Rome* which filled the large space extending thence to the *Pomœrium* (*post mœrium* or *murum*,) the outer limit beyond the second walls with which Rome was encircled.

The new quarters successively added to the original *city* were designated by the generic name of *suburbana* (suburbs.) This distinction was made independently of the division of Rome into fourteen *regions* which were subdivided into nearly two hundred quarters.

The *city* was *holy*. But this epithet was not used in the same sense we now attach to it when applying it to Rome, considered as the capital of Christendom. The adjective holy—*sancta* (from *sancire*—meant simply that the city was protected by the *sanctions* of the law against the violations and outrages of men. The sanction or penalty of the law against the violators of the walls of the city was capital punishment. It was established by Romulus, who put to death his brother Remus because the latter had violated his orders and crossed the walls of the infant city. This law existed until the last period of the Roman empire. Justinian in his *Institutes* (Lib. 2, Tit. 1, § 10) alludes to it as still in vigor in his time.

(*Ibid.*) *Græcostasis.*—Palaces were unknown in Rome. Dwellings, however spacious and splendid, were simply styled *houses* (Domus.) But the residences of the Emperors and of the wealthiest citizens being situate in the Palatine region, which was the tenth region of Rome, the word *palace* was gradually derived from the name of that locality, as expressing the impression left upon the mind by the sumptuousness of the buildings erected in the *Palatine*.

Page 10. *Palæstrion chained in his lodge.*—Such was the custom in Rome concerning the slaves to whom was committed the care of the house-gate. They were secured by heavy chains to the walls of their lodge lest they should escape. They became as an appurtenance of the house, and were sold together with it, unless it was otherwise expressly stipulated. Those wretched beings had no other companion than a large dog, whose friendship they conciliated by occasionally feeding the animal with cooked frogs.

(PAGE 13.) *The emperor Great Pontiff.* Previous to the reign of Augustus, the dignity of Great Pontiff was always conferred upon illustrious citizens; but it was not a prerogative attached to any charge or office. Since Augustus, who first assumed this dignity, it became the special attribute of the emperors. Singular to relate! notwithstanding their conversion to Christianity, Constantine and his successors continued to act as Great Pontiffs. Gratian, according to Zozimus, or Theodose, according to other writers, was the first who, understanding how incompatible it was with that of a Christian emperor, abdicated this title.

(PAGE 16.) *The laticlave.*—This garment was a tunic made of the finest white woolen cloth, with a very wide purple band (*latus clavus*) stitched in the centre. It differed from the *angusticlave* (*angustus clavus,*) the garment worn by simple knights, in the width of the purple band, which was made much narrower in the latter. The *toga,* that primitive garment of the Romans, and whence they derived their name of *gens togata,* had almost disappeared under the emperors. It was worn only by poor citizens, by clients, and by the lawyers, whose official costume it was when they pleaded before the courts.

(*Ibid.*) *Ward and guardian.*—The divine Aurelia was of age, twelve years being the term fixed by the Roman law. But women, on account of the frailty of their sex and their legal and permanent incapacity, were provided for life with a special guardian who was styled *cessitius tutor,* because he could transfer his functions to another.

(PAGE 19.) *Torturing slaves.*—For the cruel treatment of their slaves by the Roman matrons, see Properce, Ovid, Amor I, 14, V. 18, de Art. Amat. III, V. 240; Juvenal, *passim* and particularly his sixth satyre. We will quote here those lines to show how easily the life of a slave was disposed of. They contain a dialogue between a woman who asks the death of a slave and her husband:

> Pone crucem servo:—Meruit quo crimine servus,
> Supplicium? Quis testis adest? Quis detulit? Audi,
> Nulla unquam de morte hominis cunctatis longa est.
> —O demens! ita servus homo est? nil fecerit, esto.
> Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas!!!
>
> (Jun. Sat vi, Ver 218 et Seq.)

(PAGE 22.) *The porticoes.*—The monumental part of the *campus martius* was principally remarkable for the porticoes which had been erected there at different periods. They were disposed in circular order, at short intervals, so that visitors could pass from one to another in going round this whole quarter. There were eight porticoes in this region, independently of the *Septa Julia* and the *Septa Agrippiana,* vast enclosures which could have been con-

sidered as the most immense of porticoes had they been constructed for the purpose of public walks. But they had another destination.

The eight galleries we have alluded to were known by the following names: the portico of *Octavia* and that of *Phillip*, the portico of *Minucius*, the portico of *Octavius*, also called the *Corinthian* portico, the portico of *Pompey* and the *Hecatonstylon*, so named on account of its hundred columns; the portico of *Good Event*, and finally that of *Neptune*, or of the *Argonauts*.

(PAGE 23.) *The myrrhine vases.*—According to the most common opinion—although it is contradicted by Winckelman—the myrrhine or murrhine vases were simply China porcelain. Pliny relates that it was Pompey who, after his victories over Tigrane and Mithridates, brought the first of these vases to Rome. It was believed that they were manufactured by the Parthians, as shown by this line from Properce, where allusion is also made to a process of baking similar to that of china ware:

"Murrenque in Parthis pocula cocta focis."

Albeit, they soon acquired a price even more exorbitant than that of Corinthian brass, which was held as more precious than gold.

Apollonius of Thyana had visited every known country in the world, and it seems certain that he had penetrated as far as China. It is related in history that, having come to Rome to justify himself before Domitian of his intrigues with Nerva, he presented him with many valuable curiosities which he had brought back from his long travels. When met by the divine Aurelia, in Pompey's portico, he was seeking protection against Domitian's anger.

(PAGE 27.) *Petronilla.*—We are aware that many authors have denied the existence of this daughter of St. Peter, although it is certain that this apostle was married at the time he was selected. But the most ancient and trustworthy writers assert that Petronilla, the daughter of St. Peter, died a virgin, in Rome, at a very old age.

(PAGE 29.) *Paul's confinement.*—Generally, the *accused*, in Rome, were not cast in prison; they were simply *in custodiam*—that is, subjected to certain measures of surveillance. They were not imprisoned even after condemnation, except when sentenced to death. They were then confined in the *Tullianum*, a subterranean prison, so called because it had been constructed by King Tullius; or again, in the upper part of this prison, styled *Mamertine*, from *Mamers*, the name, in the tongue of the Osques of Ancus-Martius who had built it. Capital executions, besides, suffered little delay. But neither the committal of a prisoner to await trial, nor the penalty of imprisonment was then known in Rome. This assertion could be proved by numerous examples; but this question would lead us too far.

(PAGE 30.) *The Capena-Gate.*—No mistake can possibly exist as to the place where the Jews—that is, the first Christians—were compelled to seek shelter after their expulsion from the city. It is indicated with the greatest precision in these lines of Juvenal:

> Substitit ad veteres arcus, madidam que Capenam:
> Heic, ubi nocturnæ Numa constituebat amicæ.
> Nunc sacri fontis nemus, et delubra locantur
> Judæis; quorum cophinus, fenum que supellex.
> Omnis enim populo mercedem pendere jussa est
> Arbor, et ejectis mendicat silva camænis.
>
> (Sat. III, V. 11a17.)

We see in the *Acts of Saint Cecilia*, that the spot where the Jews resided was near the Appian Way—which in fact commenced at the Capena-Gate—and situated close to the third milestone:

"Vade in tertium milliarium ab urbe, via quæ Appia nuncupatur; illic invenies pauperes a transeuntibus alimoniæ petentes auxilium; de his enim mihi semper cura fuit.—(Acta S. Cæciliæ.)

It was there, beyond all doubt, as shown by the same *Acts*, that the Pontiff of the Christians resided. The continuation of this passage reads thus:

"Hos tu dum videris, dabis eis benedictionem meam, dicens: Cæcilia me misit ad vos, ut ostendatis mihi sanctum senem Urbanum; quoniam ad ipsum habes ejus secreta mandata, quæ perferam. . . ."

And in another place:

"Si consiliis meis acquiescas, et permittas te purificari fonte perenni, et credas unum Deum esse in cœlis vivum et verum, poteris eum videre. Et quis erit qui me purificat, ut ego angelum videam? Est senior qui novit purificare homines, ut mereantur videre Angelum Dei.—(Acta S. Cæciliæ.")

Upon comparing these two texts, that of Juvenal and that of the *Acts*, it becomes manifest: 1st. That the Jews lived in the neighborhood of the Capena-Gate; 2d. That the Jews were no others than the first Christians, since St. Cecilia sent her husband, Valerian, to them, in order that the holy old man Urban, then Pontiff of the Christians, should purify him by baptism. It will be observed that the *Acts*, like Juvenal, represent the Christians as poor and begging: "*Invenies pauperes a transeuntibus alimoniæ petentes auxilium.*"

(PAGE 31) The Apostle St. Paul was a native of Tarsus, in Cilicia; but he was the son of a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, who became a Roman citizen when Augustus granted this proud title to all the inhabitants of the city of Tarsus. Paul had been brought up in the sect of the Pharisees, and besides, in Seneca's eyes, he must have passed for a Jew.

(PAGE 31.) *Paul and Seneca.*—This chapter is not the suggestion of fancy. A very old tradition of the Church asserts that intimate relations existed between St. Paul and Seneca, and that they kept up a correspondence. This tradition was unanimously

accepted until the middle of the 15th century, when Leonello, Marquis of Ferrara and Modena, commenced to contradict it. Since, there has been no want of opponents, and among these we may name Erasmus, Theodore de Beze, Baronius, Regnaud, Frassen, du Parron, Estius, etc. However, if we were to publish the names of all those who in anterior times strengthened this tradition with their testimony, the list would be still longer and more imposing.

Grave, indeed, is the authority of such names as those of St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Linus, of Sophronius, the patriarch, of Byzarue, and the friend and contemporary of St Jerome. Even if we confine ourselves to these illustrious witnesses, their declarations leave not the smallest doubt that friendly relations did exist between St. Paul and Seneca. This tradition of the first ages of the Church is accepted and defended by modern writers, among whom we will name the Count de Maistre, Mr. Villemain, Mr. du Rozoir, Mr. Troplong, the learned Abbe Greppo, and Mr. Amedee Fleury.

Besides the testimony of St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and others, there are four facts which, it seems to us, tend to the positive proof of these relations: 1st. The indisputable fact of the Apostle's acquaintance with Gallion, the brother of Seneca. It is scarcely possible that the proconsul of Achaia would have left the philosopher in ignorance of the effect produced in Greece by the new doctrine of the Gospel, preached by such a man as S. Paul. 2d. The Apostle's arrival and public preaching in Rome in Seneca's time. 3d. The unlikelihood that the philosopher could have remained indifferent to events which were making so much noise in the capital of the world, and which must have interested him particularly. 4th. Finally, and above all, the writings of Seneca himself, in which passages are frequently found which are evidently copied from the epistles of St. Paul, and which abound in Christian feelings, and words which, previous to him, had never been used in their Biblical and figurative sense by any of the ancient philosophers.

(PAGE 38.) *Simon the Magician.*—The rash attempt of Simon the Magician has been contested by most of the modern ecclesitical writers; yet Justin, Ambrose, Cyrillus of Jerusalem, Augustine, Philastre, Isadore de Peluse, and Theodoret assert that the fact of his rising in the air was real and physically true. The pagan author, Dion Chrysostome, confirms their testimony when he asserts (Or. 21) that Nero detained a long time at his court a magician who promised to fly in the air. Suetonius, in a curious passage of his Life of Nero (chap. 12), says that this event occurred at the public games; but the new Icarus, after a few efforts, fell to the ground,

near the Emperor's room: " . . . Icarus primo statin conatu juxta cubiculum ejus decidit, ipsum que cruore respersit."

(PAGE 40.) *Velleda.*—This prophetess of the Germans lived in Vespasian's time, and was worshipped as a divinity after her death. Her people never undertook anything without first consulting her, and she took an important part in the insurrection of Civilis. She was taken prisoner by Rutilus Gallus, who, it seems, led her in triumph to Rome. (Tacitus, Hist. IV, 61 and 65. V. 22 and 24; Germ. 8.)

(PAGE 43.) *The Sons of David.*—Hegesippus, an almost contemporary author, asserts this fact, which we shall see realized hereafter. Eusebius has preserved this narrative of Hegesippus in Ecclesiastical History.—(Lib. III, chap. 12, 19 and 20.)

(PAGE 49.) *The triumvir capital.*—This was the title of the chief of the night police in Rome. He had under his orders five citizens, styled *Quinquevirs*, who commanded each a cohort of public slaves. Subsequently, the triumvir capital gave way to the prefect of the *Vigils*, who was assisted by cohorts, tribunes and centurions, in preserving order in the city.

(PAGE 49.) *Burials.*—It may seem strange that we speak of *graves* when it was the general custom to burn the bodies of the dead on funeral piles. But every citizen had not the means of paying for the wood required in such circumstances; the remains of the poor were therefore *buried.* Moreover, a religious notion, traces of which are found in the law of the Twelve Tables, tended to present the burial of the body as necessary *to the repose of the soul;* and this burial was always simulated by throwing a little earth, at three different times, upon the body which was to be burned. The law, besides, made the burial desirable for the repose it secured to the manes, by declaring *sacred* the soil in which a corpse had been buried. This ground became inalienable and perpetually without the compass of prescription. (Institutes, Lib. II, Tit. Arst. § 9.)

(PAGE 54.) *Jugatinus.*—This god presided over marriages, and was supposed to inspire young girls with a desire for the married state. With this view numberless small statues of this god were exposed for sale in the taverns, and few young girls were without a little Jugatinus in their cubiculum. When the wedding took place the image of Jugatinus was borne in triumph before the bride, as a mark of gratitude.

(PAGE 63.) *Flavius Clemens and his family.*—All that we have stated here is historical, or founded on facts. Flavius Clemens and his wife, Flavia Domitilla, were victims of Domitian's persecution.

Their names are inscribed in the Martyrology, and Suetonius (Domit. 15) confirms the murder of Flavius Clemens in the same passage in which he speaks of their two sons being raised to the dignity of Cæsars. No further mention of these two young princes is to be found in history, and everything tends to show that, as Christians, they shared the misfortunes of their family.

(PAGE 64.) *The communion of the faithful.*—Fleury, in his *Mœurs des Chrétiens*, tells us that whoever was admitted at the celebration of the sacred mysteries communicated thereat. The faithful even carried away the Eucharist to share it with the sick and invalids who had not been able to attend.

(PAGE 66.) *Saturnalia and Matronalia.*—The Saturnalia took place about the middle of December, which was the last month of the year, and the Matronalia in the kalends of March, which in ancient times commenced the year. This had a meaning which is revealed by this passage of Macrobe (Saturn. XII): "*Hoc mense* (Martis) *servis cœnas apponebant matronæ, ut domini Saturnalibus: illæ ut principio anni ad promptum obsequium honore servos invitarent; hi quia gratiam perfecti operis exsolverent.*"—"In this month of March the matrons waited at table upon their slaves, as the masters did in the Saturnalia. The former, at the commencement of the year, wished, by the honors shown them, to inspire their slaves with the principle of prompt obedience; whilst the latter acquitted themselves towards their slaves of what was due them for their good services during the year."

(PAGE 71.) *Primipilar.*—The Roman legion was a corps of six thousand men, divided into ten *cohorts;* the cohort was subdivided into three *maniples*, and the maniple into two *centuries*, or hundreds. A cavalry corps was attached to the legion.

The cohort and its three maniples were commanded by *centurions*, who came after the *tribunes*. The centurion in command of the first maniple was superior to the two others, and was styled the *Primipilar*. The ranking Primipilar in the legion—that is, the centurion who filled this office in the first cohort—was admitted into the councils of war with the General and the Tribunes.

(PAGE 75.) *The Prætor.*—At first there was only one prætor in Rome, charged with the execution of the laws. He was styled *urban* prætor, because his jurisdiction did not extend beyond the limits of the city. The number of foreigners or strangers living temporarily in the city having increased considerably, it was found necessary to appoint another prætor, who was designated as *peregrinus* or stranger, because he tried only cases arising between strangers. Subsequently, as the population and the number of suits increased, the number of prætors was augmented. Under

Claudius it was increased from sixteen to eighteen. Titus suppressed one of the two pretors appointed by Claudius. Nerva, who succeeded Domitian, reinstated the eighteenth pretor, but limited his jurisdiction to questions between the fisc and the non-residents. (Digest Lib. 1, Tit. II, s. 2.) It will be seen by this that each pretor had his special jurisdiction.

There were other magistrates, besides, in Rome, but they took cognizance of special questions not appertainiug to common or criminal law. Thus, there were six ediles for administrative questions, and the prefects of the *annone* and *vigils*, with numerous delegates, for questions of subsistence and the immediate repression of offences against the public security. The Tribunes of the people and the two Consuls also performed certain judicial functions.

The pretors, notwithstanding their increased number, could not attend to all the suits brought before them They appointed simple citizens as special judges or arbiters to investigate the facts connected with certain cases, and instructed them to condemn or absolve, according to the proof offered: *Si paret* (here the allegation was specified) *condemna; si non paret absolve.* It was, therefore, still the pretor who decided by proxy. These judgments were styled *ordinary,* because they were very frequent. When the case involved merely a legal point and required no investigation of facts, the pretor decided in person, in which case the judgment was styled *extraordinary.*

(PAGE 75.) *Intercisus dies* —The days were divided into *auspicious, inauspicious, and undecided.* On the *inauspicious* days the pretor was not permitted to pronounce the three consecrated words (*do, dico, addico.*)

Ille nefactus erit per quem tria verba silentur.

On the *auspicious* days justice had its free course:

Fastus erit, per quem lege licebit agi.
(Ovid, Fast. 1, V, 47 and 39.)

The *undecided* days (*intercisi dies*) were partly auspicious and partly inauspicious. The action of the law was suspended during the inauspicious hours. This class of days being very numerous, serious difficulties often resulted therefrom during the course of legal proceedings.

(PAGE 80.) *Marcus Attilius Regulus.*—Tacitus (Hist. IV, 42) calls him "Aquilius" instead of "Attilius," but there is good reason to believe this a mistake of the copyist. Regulus was certainly one of the family of Marcus Attilius Regulus, the celebrated prisoner of the Carthaginians.

The character of the informer, as hideous as it may appear, is not a fanciful creation. Regulus had a son whom he seemed to

love dearly, which did not prevent him from swearing to the most odious falsehoods *upon the head of his child* (Pliny IV, 20.) What Pliny had foreseen (*eod. loco*) happened. The gods, to punish his many perjuries, took away his son (Pliny IV, 2.) He mourned him with great ostentation. Sculptors and painters were called upon to multiply the child's image in numberless statues in wax, brass, silver, gold, ivory and marble. Regulus wrote a life of his child, and read it in a numerous assemblage. He sent thousands of copies of this work all over Italy, and the best declaimers read them to the people in the towns. (Pliny IV, 7.) The child had, during his life, many ponies, for the saddle and carriage, dogs of all sizes, nightingales, parrots and blackbirds. Regulus had all these animals killed and thrown on his son's pyre. And this was not true sorrow, but a real comedy, adds Pliny the younger. (IV, 2.)

This singular and wicked individual carried these ostentatious habits in every circumstance of life. This was shown in his house and gardens. As a lawyer he was not less eccentric. He consulted the aruspices when he had a case to plead; he draped himself in garments to suit the circumstances, and never failed to rub with essences one or the other eye, and to wear a white bandage over the right or left eyebrow, according to whether he was to speak for the plaintiff or the defendant. He possessed, however, one good quality: he allowed his opponents to speak as long as they wished. It is true that, in return, he trespassed without moderation upon the patience of his hearers. (Pliny, VI, 2.)

The biography of Regulus has been written by Mr. Grellet-Dumazeau, in his remarkable work on the *Roman Bar*. We have taken many of the details above given from this work, but we may add that they are found entire in seven of Pliny's letters, in a passage from Tacitus, and in a dozen of Martial's epigrams.

(PAGE 85.) *Noxal abandonment.*—The Roman law made a distinction between the offender, who was styled *noxa*, and the offense itself, which was designated by the word *noxia*: "Noxa autem est corpus quod nocuit, id est servus; noxia, ipsum maleficium, veluti furtum, damnum, rapina, injuria." (Just. Inst., IV, Tit. 8, §1.)

When the *noxa*, that is to say the author, of the offense, *the body which had injured*, belonged as a *thing* either to a father or a master, the master or father were held responsible for the reparation of the prejudice resulting from the offense, or for the payment of the pecuniary penalty applied to it. And the father or master could escape from this responsibility only by the *noxal* abandonment of the son, the daughter, the slave or the animal which had caused the damage. This came from the intimate tie recognized by the Roman law between the father and his children, the master and

his slaves, the proprietor and his animals. It is sad and shameful to acknowledge this, but in the eyes of the legislator, these three things: a son or daughter, a slave, and an animal, were one and the same thing. A slight distinction was made in the forms of proceeding, but the consequences of the legal lien were the same in all cases. The son or the slave, always considered as *things* belonging to their father or master, could become, like the animal, the object of a noxal abandonment. (Gaius, Inst., IV, 75, 77, 78 and 79—Just. Inst., Lib. IV, Titles 8 and 9.) The noxal abandonment of children was finally abolished only in Justinian's time. (Inst. Lib. IV, Title viii, §7.)

(PAGE 137.) *The Flavian race.*—As some of our readers might think that the characters presented in this narrative are the creation of fancy, we give here their well-authenticated genealogy, to show that they are historical. It will throw a curious light upon the humble origin of that proud Flavian race which gave three emperors to Rome, to wit: Vespasian, Titus and Domitian.

1st. The founder of the Flavian race was a poor undertaker of public works (manceps operarum), who passed each year from Umbria to the country of the Sabines, to find employment, and who finally settled in Reata, where he married. His name and that of his wife have remained unknown. (Suet. in Vesp. cap. 1.)

2d. Titus-Flavius-Petronius, son of the above named. He participated in the battle of Pharsalia, where he commanded a century. After Pompey's defeat, he withdrew to Reata, where he became a collector of taxes. (Suet. in Vesp., cap. 1.) He married Tertulla. (Suet. ibid., cap. 5 and 24, and in Tit., cap. 11.)

3d. Flavius Sabinus, son of the above named. He was at one time a publican in Asia, and subsequently held an office in Helvetia, where he died. He had married Vespasia Polla. Three children were born of this marriage: a daughter, who did not live to be a year old (*quæ non perannavit*); Sabinus, styled Sabinus major because he was the eldest, and who became prefect of the town; and Vespasian, who became emperor. (Suet. in Vest., cap. 5 and 1st.)

Sabinus major had undoubtedly a son, Flavius Sabinus, who married Julia, the daughter of Titus (Suet. in Domit., cap. 10, 17 and 22), and was probably also the father of Flavius Clemens, the martyr (Suet. in Domit., 15), who married Flavia Domitilla, the niece of Domitian. Sabinus had besides a daughter who was the mother of Saint Flavia Domitilla, the virgin.

Of the marriage of Flavius Clemens with the first Flavia Domitilla, two sons were born, whose names were changed into those of Vespasian and Domitian on the occasion of their being raised to

the dignity of Cæsars by the Emperor Domitian. (Suet. in Domit., cap. 15, and Quintilian, Inst. ovat. Lib. IV, proem.)

The Emperor Vespasian, brother of Sabinus, married a freedwoman named Flavia Domitilla, who had been the slave of Statilius Capella, knight. (Suet. in Vesp., 3.) They had three children: Titus, Domitian and Domitilla. (Suet. ibid.)

Titus, emperor, married Arricidia Tertulla, from whom he had no children. After her death, he married Marcilla Furnilla, of whom he had Julia, who married her cousin, Flavius Sabinus. Of this marriage was born Aurelia-Flavia-Domitilla, our heroine. (Suet. in Tit. cap. 4; in Domit. 10, 12, 17, 22.)

Domitian, emperor, married Domitia Longina, the daughter of Domitius Corbulo, a general in the Roman army under Claudius and Nero. Domitian had taken her away from her first husband, Ælius Lamia, whom he put to death. (Suet. in Domit., cap. 1.) He had a son who died in his infancy. (Ibid, cap. 2.)

Finally, Domitilla married to an unknown. But from this marriage was born Flavia Domitilla, the wife of Flavius Clemens, martyr, and who was banished by Domitian. (Suet. in Vesp., cap. 3; Quintilian, Inst. ovat. Lib. IV, proem.)

Thus, Domitian's family, from among the members existing in his own life-time, gave three martyrs to the Roman martyrology: Flavius Clemens; his wife, Flavia Domitilla; and Flavia Domitilla, the virgin martyr.

(PAGE 145.) *The word madam.*—We have already used on several occasions, in this narrative, the word *madam*, which seems of modern origin. The following note, taken from Mr. de Champagny's work, *The Cæsars* (Vol. II, page 145), fully justifies the use we have made of it:

"Our word *monsieur* (sir) is not without an equivalent in the Latin language, at least in the time of the emperors. It is remarked that Augustus would not permit himself to be addressed as *lord* (dominus) even by his children. (Suet. in Aug., 53.)—When women are fourteen years old, we call them *madam*. (Epictetus, 40.)—To those we meet, and whose names we do not remember, we say: *Sir* (dominus.) (Seneca, 3.)—*Dominus meus Gallio*, says Seneca, speaking of his brother (Ep. 105). *Peto abs se, domina uxor.* Jurisc. de legatis. *Domina Ditis.* (Virgil, Æneid. VI, 397.) *Dominum Æneam* (IV, 214). *Græci uxorem dominam vocant* (Servius).—Claudius, forgetting Messalina's death, asks if *madam* is coming: *Cur domina non veniret.* (Suet. in Claud., 39)."

(PAGE 175.) *Britannicus.*—Tacitus, Annal. lib. XIII, cap. XVI; Britannicus was the son of Claudius and Messalina; Nero was the son of Ænobarbus and Aggripina, daughter of Germanicus. Properly speaking, Nero, therefore, was not the brother of Britannicus. But Aggripina afterwards married Claudius, and this prince adopted Nero, who subsequently married Octavia, the daughter of Claudius and the sister of Germanicus. Nero was consequently the brother-in-law and the adopted brother of Britannicus.

(PAGE 176.) *The death of Titus.*—These facts are related by Dion Cassius and by Zonaras. Suetonius merely states that Domitian abandoned his brother before he had breathed his last. (In Domit., cap. 11.) But Aurelius Victor asserts that Domitian caused Titus' death.

(PAGE 183.) *The luminous gallery.*—Pliny-the-Younger alludes to these stone walls between which Domitian believed himself inaccessible, and which, nevertheless, the conspiracy inspired by his crimes succeeded in penetrating.

(PAGE 205.) *St. James and St. Jude.*—The relationship of these two brothers with Jesus Christ is demonstrated by Mr. de Tillemont. The interrogatory of the two brothers is taken almost *verbatim* from Eusebius (Hist. Lib. 3, cap. 12, 19 and 20.)

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, died in Rome in the year of our Lord, 93. He had enjoyed much favor from Vespasian and Titus, who admired his works, and it is likely that Domitian also honored him and admitted him to his court.—The interrogatory we have related, and which is entirely historical, took place, according to certain authors, at the beginning of the persecution waged by Domitian against the Christians, that is to say, towards the year 95. We believe we are nearer to the truth when we place it in the year 92. It is scarcely probable that Domitian, at the time he was persecuting the Christians, would have sent back to Jerusalem the two sons of the apostle after they had publicly confessed their faith in the presence of his court.

(PAGE 215.) *The Mysteries of Isis.*—Juvenal, Satyr. VI, 510 to 541. This passage of Juvenal seems to us the more remarkable that it contains that blending of *Christianity* with *judaism* frequently observed in the facts belonging to that period when the Jews and Christians were often confounded together. It reveals, above all, how powerful, despite the denunciations of the wise men of heathen Rome, was the influence of the newly imported doctrines upon society.

The quotations we are about to make here will demonstrate that the priests of Cybele had introduced into the celebration of the mysteries of Isis the practice of *confession*, accompanied with the ancient ceremonies of expiation of the Jews. We find in these lines of Juvenal relating to confession, the three external circumstances which characterize it, viz: 1st, the indication of the fault which will give rise to accusation and expiation; 2d, the accusation accompanied with supplications to the deity to obtain forgiveness; 3d, the expiation imposed as a satisfaction for the fault.

1st. *The indication of the fault:*

> Ille petit veniam, quoties non abstinet uxor
> Concubitu, sacris observandisque diebus.

We are aware that the feast of Ceres, which was celebrated in Rome on the fifth of the Ides of April, was the occasion for the Roman matrons of certain purifications.

> Annua venerunt Cerealis tempora sacri.
> Secubat in vacuo sola puella toro.
>
> (Ovid *Amor. Lib.* III, *Eleg.* 10.)

These chaste resolutions lasted more or less—sometimes during ten entire days.

> Tristia jam redeunt iterum solemnia nobis:
> Cynthia jam noctes est operata decem.
>
> (Prop. *Lib.* II, *Eleg.* 24.)

But there is nothing to show that the non-observance of these purifications, or failure in carrying out these resolutions, gave the woman occasion for any accusation or the least expiation.

Juvenal is the first and only writer who has made the priest say that an infraction of the precept demands a solemn atonement.

> Magnaque debetur violata pœna cadurco.

Is it not significant that at the very time when the first notions of Christian virginity and chastity were becoming known through the teachings of the Apostles, that which had constituted but a purely voluntary ceremony was transformed into a fault requiring a penal satisfaction?

2d. *The accusation of the fault.*—But what was the duty of the woman who had violated the sanctity of the consecrated days? She had to accuse herself before a priest who invoked the mercy of the deity (*ille petit veniam*) upon the condition that satisfaction should be made and some offerings presented.

Another remarkable feature is that the priest implored the deity on behalf of the repentant woman, in presence of a *silver serpent* erected in the temple—evidently in memory of the *brazen serpent* erected by Moses in the wilderness for the remission of the faults of the people of Israel.

> Et movisse caput visa est argentea serpens
> Illius lacrymis, meditataque murmura præstat
> Ut veniam culpae non abnuat, ansere magno
> Scilicet, et tenui popano corruptus Osiris.

3d. *The expiation of the fault.*—This expiation had three forms expressed in the following lines of the same passage from Juvenal: immersion in the waters of the Tiber, in imitation, doubtless, of the purification in the Jordan; the painful ceremony of crawling on one's bare knees in the Campus-Martius; and finally, in very serious cases, the voyage to the Island of Meroe, in Egypt, to seek the water which should be poured into the temple of Isis.

> Hiberuum fracta glacie descendet in amnem,
> Ter matutino Tiberi mergetus, et ipsis
> Vorticibus timidum caput abluet: inde superbi
> Totum regis agrum, nuda ac tremebunda cruentis

Erebet genibus: Si candida jusserit Io,
Ibit ad Ægypti finem, calidaque petitas
A Meroë portabit aquas, ut spargat in ædem
Isidis, antiquo quæ proxima surgit ovili.

And finally, to complete the analogy, the matron shall do all this, says Juvenal, ironically, because she believes that it is the goddess herself who orders it by the organ of the priests.

Credit enim ipsius dominæ se voce moneri.

(PAGE 216.) *The Gallii.*—Faithful to the resolve we have made of presenting no dangerous pictures to our readers, we shall not say why the priests of Cybele or Isis were styled *gallii*. We refer the curious to the note of Servius on the 116th line of the IXth book of the Eneid; to Ovid, Fast. lib. IV, lines 181 to 383 for particulars, confirmed besides by other passages from Juvenal, Macrobe, Lucan, Pliny, Martial, etc. From the word *gallare* (to go to the *gallii*) the French have derived the words *galant* and *galante*.

(PAGE 217.) *Hierarchy of the priesthood.*—Numa regulated the worship founded by Romulus, and designated the rank and functions of the priests. Thus, from the beginning there were priests attached to the general worship (ministri sacrorum), and others attached to the service of some particular deity.

Numa instituted four colleges of priests: the *Pontiffs*, the *Augurs* and *Aruspices*, the *Quindecemvirs*, and the *Septemvirs-Epulon*; and three Flamines: the *Flamine-Dial* for Jupiter, the *Flamine-Martial* for Mars, the *Flamine-Quirinal* for Quirinus or Romulus.

Besides these four colleges and three Flamines, there were other corporations or individuals who filled very important sacred offices; and finally, there was the college of *Vestals*, an institution of the remotest antiquity and the only college of priestesses in Rome.

Such was the original organization of the hierarchy; it was modified to meet the new exigencies arising from the mania of the Roman people for multiplying the number of their gods and their desire to people with them the capital of the world. This was carried to such an extent that the most shameful and ridiculous acts were presided over by some divinity.

But a more curious historical fact, not so generally known, is the following:

When a Roman general began the siege of a city, his first care was to invoke the protecting gods and goddesses of that city, conjuring them to pass into his camp, whence they would be conducted to Rome, where temples would be erected and festivals or games instituted in their honor. Moreover, and in order that no god should complain of being forgotten, a temple was erected in Rome, not as in Athens: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD—which was a supreme homage of philosophy to HIM it foresaw but could not

understand—but TO THE UNKNOWN GODS, which was but a ridiculous testimonial of the singular religious mania of a people.

More Flamines were appointed to meet the increase in religious services. Among the last created, and which could be selected from the ranks of the plebeians, were the *Gallii,* whom we have introduced in this narrative.

(PAGE 219.) *The Archigallus' house.*—Those who have read Petronius will recognize in our description of the residence of the Archigallus and the death of the sacred goose, an imitation of one of the episodes of the *Satyricon.*

(PAGE 237.) *The Christian Notaries.*—As early as in the first century, the great pontiff, Saint Clemens, wishing to preserve for the future ages the recital of the triumphs of the Martyrs, had instituted seven Notaries, whose duty was to collect and put in writing the circumstances accompanying the generous sacrifice of these champions of the Faith. Each of these Notaries had charge of two of the fourteen regions of Rome.—Dom Gueranger, *vie de Sainte Cecile,* page 148.—This is what has since been styled the *Acts of the Martyrs,* and continued by the care of the successors of Saint Clemens. It was this same pope, St. Clemens, who founded the Christian cemetery of the catacombs, since styled "cemetery of Calixtus" because it was much enlarged by the pope of that name. This burying-ground was situated precisely where we have located it in our story. The following passage leaves no doubt on this point: "*Facit* (Calixtus) *cœmeterium* VIA APPIA, *ubi multi sacerdotes et Martyres requiescunt, quod appellatur usque in hodiernum diem cœmeterium Callisti.*" (Anastas. in Calixto.) Dom Gueranger says about this passage, that Calixtus had simply enlarged the cemetery of the *Appian Way.* (Life of St. Cecilia.) Finally, in another place this learned author says, as we do, that the retreat of the first Christians and their bishops was *in the shade of the sacred crypts of the Appian Way, near the tomb of the martyrs.*

(PAGE 257.) *Punishment of the Vestals.*—We have stated that the order of the Vestals existed eleven hundred years. During this long space of time, only twenty Vestals were convicted of having broken their vow of chastity. Thirteen of these twenty were buried alive; the other seven perished in some other manner selected by themselves. Four Vestals were sentenced to death during Domitian's reign: Varonilla and the two sisters Ocellates who stabbed themselves, and the Grand-Vestal Cornelia, whose execution was ordered with all the rigor of the ancient rites.

(PAGE 274.) *The good goddess.*—It has never been ascertained who was the Good-Goddess or what were her mysteries. The old writers designate her some times as *Fauna,* and at others *Fatua,*

from the name of a chaste matron, whose face no man ever saw while she lived. Hence, it is said, the Roman matrons celebrated her feast in the night-time and in the absence of every male individual. (Alexander ab Alexandro, VI, 8.) Other authors contend that the Good-Goddess was Ops, Maia-Majesta, Cybele, Ceres, Venus-Cottyto, etc. No man was permitted to know her name (Cic. de Arusp. resp. 17; Lactan. Divin. Inst. 1, 22); which explains this uncertainty of the historians.

(PAGE 296.) *The punishment of Regulus.*—Some of our readers may think that the pleasant punishment of tossing one in a blanket is of modern invention. Here is our authority for describing it as an ancient pastime:

"To toss one, says Suetonius (*in Othone, cap.* 2,) is to make him spring up in the air by means of a blanket strongly distended. (*Aliquem impositum distento sago,* in *sublime jactare.*")

(PAGE 329.) *The Grand Vestal's deliverance.*—This fact, properly studied, possesses the character of historical certainty, although it is naturally surrounded with mystery. The Christians concealed it carefully. This was necessary to avoid persecution and to prevent the victim from being recaptured and condemned anew. On the other hand, the pontiffs and Domitian were interested in concealing a deed which dealt a terrible blow to the vain terrors of ancient superstition by proving that the gods were powerless to avenge such a great crime.

It seems certain, however, that this deliverance did not remain a secret, and that when it was first known great efforts were made to discover the Grand Vestal. Dion Cassius and Pliny-the-Younger speak of events which occurred in Rome after the double condemnation of Metellus Celer and the Grand Vestal, which throw a strange light on this question. Both relate that, notwithstanding this condemnation, many persons implicated in the same accusation were prosecuted and cruelly tortured. What necessity was there to seek other accomplices, when Metellus Celer, the partner of Cornelia's alleged guilt, had perished in the Forum under the lash of the public executioner? Is it not likely that the Emperor wished, in the event of the Vestal again falling into his hands, to add to the solemnity of her execution by the torture of an accomplice?

We are strengthened in this opinion by what Pliny-the-Younger says in his celebrated letter about the Grand Vestal Cornelia (*Lib.* IV, Epist. 11.) He repeats twice that Domitian trembled with rage at his helplessness to complete the crime and the uselessness of his efforts: *Fremebat enim Domitianus, æstuabatque ingenti invidia destitus.*

Domitian, while making every effort to procure another seducer, continued his investigations to find some trace of Cornelia. Having learned that an unknown woman was concealed in the house of a lawyer named Licinian, he sent immediately his agents to arrest her. But she proved to be not Cornelia, but one of her freedwomen.

The people commenced murmuring and reproaching Domitian openly with his unjust and cruel persecutions. But he knew how to pacify the public mind by a seeming return to moderation. A secret emissary was sent to Licinian to warn him that the only way to escape death by the lash in the *Comitum* was to confess the crime and sue for mercy. Licinian acted upon this suggestion, and charged Herennius Senecion with carrying to the Emperor the avowal of his pretended incest, which was done. Domitian was so well pleased that his joy betrayed him and made him exclaim: *Licinian has fully absolved us. We must not,* he added, *press too closely his discretion,* and he contented himself with banishing the lawyer, permitting him to carry his valuables with him. After this, nothing more was said about Cornelia, unless Domitian found the means, as we have supposed, of causing her to be burnt alive with his grandniece, Flavia Domitilla, in a house in Terracina.

Such are the facts gleaned from contemporary writers. If not absolutely certain, they are singular enough to open the way for suppositions.

(Page 334.) *Martyrdom of Saint Flavia Domitilla.*—There is much uncertainty among the ecclesiastical writers concerning the precise date of the martyrdom of this saint. Some, according to the *acts* of St. Nereus and St. Achilleus, where she is mentioned as having been burnt alive at Terracina, place the event during Trajan's persecution; others place it in the year 96, and even in the year 95, which would correspond to Domitian's persecution, for Trajan, the adopted son of Nerva, only ascended the throne on the 27th of January, 849 (A. D. 98). It is known, moreover, that his first edict against the Christians was issued in A. D. 100. What likelihood is there that Trajan would have commenced the persecution by burning alive in a house in Terracina one whom he must have respected in memory of Titus and Vespasian? This secret and fearful mode of punishment was besides more in Domitian's habits than in Trajan's. It must be remembered, moreover, that Trajan's persecution was developed in all its rigor only after his wars against the Dacians and Parthians, that is towards the years 106 and 108. We believe therefore that the death of Saint Flavia Domitilla and Saints Nereus and Achilleus must have occurred in the year 96.

PAGE 342.) *The death of Flavius Clemens.*—Dion Cassius says: "In that same year, Domitian had put to death with many others, the consul Flavius Clemens, although the latter was his cousin and had for wife Flavia Domitilla, also his relation. They were convicted of a sort of impiety peculiar to the Jews. These, in great number, bore the penalty of their impiety; some having been condemned to death and others to the loss of their property. Domitilla was merely banished."—The Syncellum says expressly: *This Clemens suffered death for Christ.* Finally, in the beginning of the last century, the tomb of Clemens was discovered at Rome, with an epitaph in which he is styled a *martyr*.

(PAGE 344.) *The causes of Domitian's murder.*—As the critics have remarked, Juvenal, in the reflections with which he ends his fourth satyre, alludes evidently to the Christians and the persecutions they had suffered, as the cause of Domitian's death:

> Atque utinam his potius nugis tota illa dedisset
> Tempora sævitiæ: claras quibus abstulit urbi.
> Illustresque animas impune, et vindice nullo.
> Sed periit, postquam cerdonibus esse timendus
> Cæperat: hoc nocuit Lamiarum cœde madenti.
>
> (Juvenal, Sat. IV, l. 150 et seq.)

Under the literal meaning of these lines, we may find another. As long as Domitian wreaked his fury upon illustrious citizens like the Lamia, whose chief was put to death by his orders (*Suet. in Domit. cap.* 10), he was in no danger, for the people whom he had never threatened remained indifferent (*Suet. ibid, cap.* 23); but the case became different when he persecuted those who were designated in Rome by terms of contempt, (*cerdones*, people who followed the vilest trades.) There is little doubt that by these "mean artisans" in the minds of the Roman public, as in that of the poet, were meant the Christians, who, like the Jews, were subjected to all sorts of insults. This interpretation given to the passage quoted from Juvenal, by the most celebrated commentators, and among others, Baronius, would therefore mean that the harsh treatment of the Christians by Domitian had been the cause of his death; the more so as his murderer, Stephanius, was the freedman of Flavia Domitilla, the wife of Flavius Clemens, whose family had particularly suffered in the persecution, and might have constituted himself the avenger of his noble masters. Of course, the latter cannot be held responsible for a crime which they would have rejected with horror; but we may draw this conclusion from the facts alluded to—that most probably our opinion as to the causes of the second persecution is correct.

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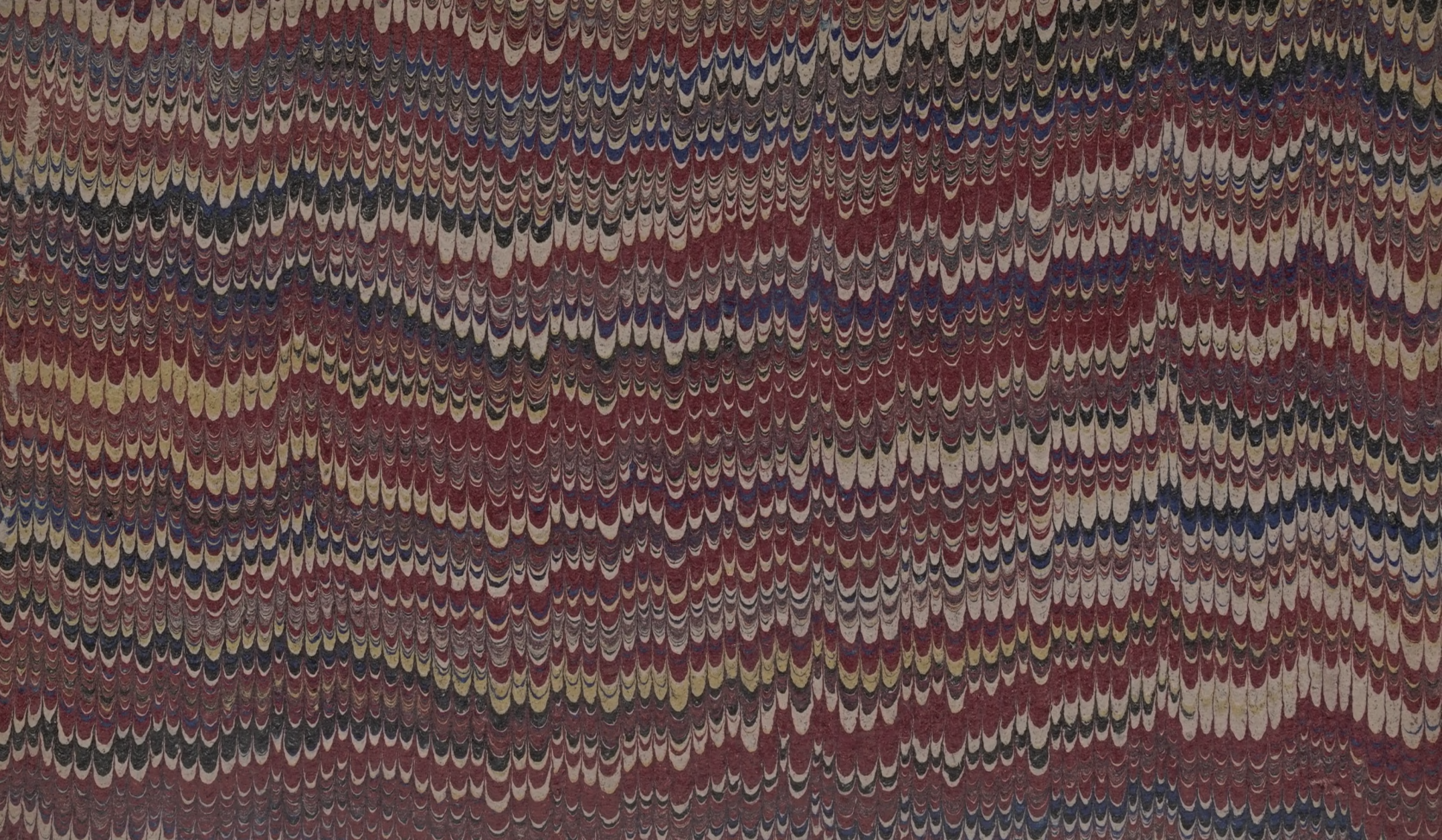
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